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GENERAL SIR ALEX TAYLOR, G.C.B., R.E.: HIS TIMES, HIS FRIENDS, AND HIS WORK

VOL. I

Charles Hartwell. Sculp.

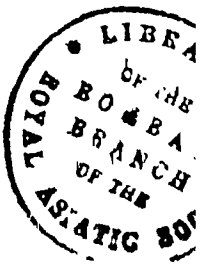
Alex Taylor.
1857
(National Memorial to be placed at Delhi)

GENERAL SIR ALEX TAYLOR G.C.B., R.E.: HIS TIMES, HIS FRIENDS, AND HIS WORK

BY HIS DAUGHTER

A. CAMERON TAYLOR

Joint-Author of "Classic Christian Art"



VOL. I

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TO EARL ROBERTS, V.C.
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE LEAGUE
TO ALL WHO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY AND
ARE PREPARED TO FIGHT FOR HER
THIS RECORD OF A LIFE DEVOTED TO NATIONAL SERVICE
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

PREFACE

THIS record of my father's life was not originally intended for publication. When his failing health made me reluctant to return to my work in Italy, unknown to him I occupied myself with the collection of information concerning his career, for it seemed wrong that his children's children should be ignorant of services of which men of distinction spoke with reverence, but of which his children's knowledge was limited to a general impression of important work done at Delhi, certain words uttered by John Nicholson, and a medley of unplaced anecdotes.

The materials at my disposal were meagre:—a few notes in my father's handwriting descriptive of the Sikh campaigns; a few bundles of fragile yellowing letters —the accidental and scanty salvage of the correspondence of half a century—written to relations and friends who have long since passed away, bundles of later letters to my mother, and notes of interesting conversations made by her at various dates, a few newspaper-cuttings, and some official records of services:—that was all.

My father had kept memorials of the stirring scenes through which he had lived, and letters which he prized—among them an autograph letter of thanks from Lord Canning, written in 1858—these and the professional notes of a lifetime were lost in the *Latona*, which was run down and sent to the bottom of the sea on the coast of Italy.

It was clear that I must turn for information to published history and to the kindness of my father's friends. When a man, however, has travelled past his fourscore years his old friends are few; most of his younger contemporaries even have passed away. Small at first, therefore, was the number of those able to help me to evoke a picture of the life and entourage of their comrade of long ago. Small was the number, but it grew. As I inquired, friends sprang up on every side; papers poured in, diaries, and packets of old letters penned by hands which are no more, and kind invitations, too, to stay in country-houses of which the masters no longer travelled far afield. Much first-hand information was thus obtained, information rich in local colour. Disconcerting, however, at first, was the skill with which my hosts combined apparent frankness with a perfectly elusive treatment of their own services. A naïve listener would have concluded from each brave man's tale that he had been but an admiring spectator of other men's deeds, or had followed in the ruck. My instructors were many, however, and all as pleased as school-boys to tell of each other's prowess; in time, therefore, my information grew to be fairly complete; its colour was certainly right. One and all were delighted to assist in the garnering of recollections of "Musha." And little by little my picture grew.

As I learned, however, it became evident to me that my father's was not an isolated figure, and should not be treated as such—that he was part of a great living organism, a body of men of interlocking activities, who laboured together unceasingly for the public welfare, and now and again played dramatic rôles in Imperial history—and came to feel that, in justice to the work achieved and to the greatness of its scope, I must enlarge my canvas.

At first all was grist that came to my mill—all characte

istic tales of brother-officers or Panjab contemporaries—but discrimination and elimination have been forced on me by exigencies of space. I soon saw that I must limit myself to suggesting the splendid and varied services of my father's Corps-comrades only, in the campaigns in which he was engaged, the work and personality of his really intimate friends—"dis-moi qui t'aime, et moi je te dirai ce que tu es"—and something of the individuality and achievements of his colleagues at Coopers Hill.

I hesitated when first asked to publish the information thus collected, knowing as I did that the picture should have been painted by stronger hands; but as these were not forthcoming, and as I was aware how unique had been the opportunities given me by many distinguished helpers, I assented—gladly, though with trepidation—in the full assurance that my readers would look beyond the defects for which I am responsible, to my great subject-matter:—the glad self-oblation of unnumbered Englishmen, who, throughout the Victorian era, devoted themselves and their abilities to the general weal, and to the satisfaction of Imperial necessities which were often on a scale unimagined by their countrymen at home.

Among my generous helpers are some whose names must not go unmentioned.

I must express my grateful thanks to those of my father's few remaining fellow-workers and contemporaries who, for his sake, have put their notes and memories at my disposal:—first and foremost, to General Sir Frederick Maunsell, for constant guidance and counsel in all that relates to the three great modern Indian sieges through which he and my father served together; then to General Thomason—alas! no more—my father's companion in many a dangerous reconnaissance at Delhi, whose vivid talk made the young and gallant company of his Corps-comrades

live in the imaginations of his listeners; to Colonel Arthur Lang, always *persona grata* to my father, at whose side he fought at Delhi and Lucknow, and whom he succeeded more than twenty years later at Simla; and to his friend Colonel Kendal Coghill, whose letters still vibrate with the enthusiasms of the young fire-eaters of fifty-five years ago; to Mr George Ricketts also—whose spirit, unweighted by years, is as unbending and valiant now as in the old days when he held Ludhiana by sheer force of character—from whose vivid conversation and shrewd comments I have learned much that I could have gathered from no one else.

I also thank F.M. Lord Roberts and F.M. Sir Charles Brownlow for their kind encouragement while my work was in progress; and my brother's Chief, F.M. Sir George White, too—who has so lately passed out of sight—for his inspiring sympathy and counsel when that work was in a very early phase of its inception.

I tender my most grateful thanks also to Mr James Macnabb, to General Sir Dighton Probyn, and General Sir John Watson, for many a word in season, words which sometimes preached caution, but more often bade me persevere in spite of difficulties; to Colonel Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff too, for warm encouragement, and to his sister, Mrs Ballard, for valued help.

I thank my cousin, Lady Wilde, for the loan of letters and papers, and Colonel Cecil Brownlow for similar loans among them the diary kept by his brother Henry Brownlow throughout the siege of Delhi, an invaluable addition to the journals kept in 1857–58 by Arthur Lang at Delhi and by Mrs Graham in the Panjab. I thank Lady Chesney also, who lent me diaries kept by Sir George Chesney during the months which preluded the foundation of Coopers Hill College, and through the years of its consolidation.

I also thank Mr Fenner very warmly. The sole representative of my father's Road-Staff to whom I was able to turn for counsel, he most generously placed his own notes for a paper on the Lahore-Peshawar Road at my disposal, and encouraged me to dip unscrupulously into this treasure-house of information collected for his own use—information which it is hoped he will soon make public.

I have also to thank Mr A. Hicks for kindly assisting me to obtain information about Coopers Hill men, with whom his position as Secretary to the Coopers Hill Society—a post filled *con amore*, and with infinite tact—keeps him in constant touch.

I am deeply indebted also to Dr Unwin; to Mr Harbord; to Professor Minchin, who has an artist's eye for the lovable and picturesque in his entourage; and to Sir William Schlich, who very kindly helped me to form a general idea of the early history of Indian Forestry.

Lastly, I have to tender my thanks to Mr Charles Buckland for his assistance in proof-reading, and for performing many offices of criticism and verification which must have been dull, but are not thankless.

Nor can I lay down my pen without expressing my gratitude to my courteous and generous publishers, who have made haste to accord me maps and portraits which make it easy to visualise the events described.

My indebtedness to already published narratives is large; I hope to have always acknowledged these debts as they occur.

I have quoted largely from the descriptions of *eye-witnesses*, published and unpublished: for this I make no apology. I am writing, not for the military historian—a task beyond my powers—but for the man and woman in the street, who love the hero and the worker. Their

knowledge of the Indian history of fifty years ago is nil, I know, and their interest in it slight. They would be interested in it, however, if it could be made alive for them Nowhere does the red blood of life throb more warm than in the actual speech of those who saw with the bodily eyes; the right phrase springs naturally to the lips, and the true, the convincing, word, which evokes answering vision.

I have generally quoted the *ipsissima verba* of eye witnesses; sometimes, however—as in the case of Gener Medley's vivid account of his life in the camp befor Delhi—I have been forced to condense.

My work has been a labour of love; a joy, and a education to myself; it has taught me the value of ideal which were those of my father and his friends, and some thing of the greatness both of National Service and those who serve.

If this book—such as it is—furthers these ideals, if familiarises its readers with the life and aspirations of a gro of gallant gentlemen and patient and determined worke representatives of a simpler and more heroic age than ou it will have achieved its purpose.

ALICIA CAMERON TAYLOR

PENHURST, ENGLEFIELD GREEN,
June 1913.

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ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

Frontispiece—

Alex Taylor in 1857

(*Statue in bronze, by Charles Hartwell, to be erected near the Mori Bastion, Delhi.*)

Maps—

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General Sir ALEX TAYLOR

G.C.B., R.E.

HIS TIMES, HIS FRIENDS, AND HIS WORK

CHAPTER I

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

Early in the last century three soldiers of Scotch extraction—Major Alex Taylor, R.E.; Major Archibald Taylor, H.M. 81st Regiment; and Captain George Taylor—were living in Dublin, where they held the posts of Commissioners of Lighting and Paving. They owned property in its neighbourhood, and received tolls—which had been granted them as rewards for their services during the rebellion of 1798—on certain roads leading into the City, which roads they seem also to have managed. They were born in Aberdeen, in the years 1746, 1747, and 1748, and were able, strong-headed, strong-tempered, adventurous men.

The career of the youngest of these brothers, George (1748–1836), the grandfather of the subject of this sketch, is a characteristic outcome of the family temperament.

Before he was thirty, he had planned and superintended the construction of the Aberdeen-Inverary Canal, which became the highway of commerce between Aberdeen and Donside; and had published a detailed survey of the roads of both

Scotland[1] and Ireland,[2] in conjunction with his friend, Alexander Skinner; the frontispiece to the latter being a map made from "actual surveys" by his elder brother, Archibald.

Suddenly the background of his life changed, and in 1779 we find him serving as a volunteer under Sir Guy Carleton in the American War of Independence.

A delightful phrase, which occurs in a letter concerning a looked-for military appointment, suggests that a lack of self-confidence was not among his faults: "it makes a difference in my pay of a dollar a day only," he observes, "but puts me immediately under the eye of Lord Cornwallis, *from whose good sense I expect some aavantage.*"

It is not known whether Lord Cornwallis rose to the height of his opportunities or not; with or without his help, however, George Taylor's force of character and ability made themselves felt; he was attached to the "Guides," and appointed Captain Surveyor to the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Clinton, but suddenly threw up this post—his skin was thin and his blood hot—and betook himself to Jamaica, where he was immediately given the office of "Island Surveyor" and a Commission as Captain in the Duke of Cumberland's local regiment. These posts, also, he speedily abandoned; returned to Aberdeen, where he married his

[1] *Taylor & Skinner's Survey and Maps of the Roads of North Britain.* Dedicated to His Grace the Duke of Argyll, Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's Forces in North Britain, 1776.

[2] *Taylor & Skinner's Maps of the Roads of Ireland.* 1st edition, 1778; 2nd edition, 1783.

The author's manuscript copy of this book is in the possession of a member of the family. It is most exquisitely written, and is illustrated with sepia maps, to which are appended descriptions of the family seats marked on them. In both these surveys, copies of which now are rare, all the country seats near the main roads are marked, and their owners named, and, in the case of Scotland, described, and associated with a history of the family to which they belonged.

cousin, Barbara Thomson of Mount Haillee, bought his father's place, Anfield, and was made a free burgess of the city, and Captain of the Aberdeen Volunteers.

It was thought that he had completed the cycle of his wanderings, and had come back to anchor in his native waters, but this was a mistake; a decade later he left Scotland for ever, in order to settle in Dublin, where, together with his brothers, Alexander and Archibald, he fulfilled certain public functions until the day of his death in 1836. Fine-looking, choleric, and most hospitable, old Captain George Taylor was a well-known and respected figure in the city of his adoption, where he died, after a residence of upwards of forty-two years, at the age of 86.

Outcomes of the same temperament were the careers of a group of the Thomsons of Mount Haillee and Fairley in Aberdeenshire, George Taylor's cousins, and his wife's nephews; nor is this surprising, for the two families had intermarried for generations.[1]

The service of the E. I. Company was always largely recruited from Scotland; about a third of the old Bengal Engineers were born North of the Tweed, and of these a third, again, hailed from the town and county of Aberdeen. Among the latter were four of the six sons of George Thomson of Fairley: George, afterwards known as "Thomson of Ghazni," and John, both of whom became Bengal Engineers; Alexander, the eldest, who joined the Bengal Artillery; and William, who entered the old "John Company's" Army Medical Service. These officers were not only able, but handsome men. John was exceedingly good-looking. Lord Napier of Magdala, after describing George as "a grand soldierly-looking man of the type of Sir Pat Grant in his younger days," adds "I introduced him to my mother, saying, 'My brother Engineers are *this* kind of

[1] George Taylor's grandmother, mother, and wife were all Thomsons.

man.'" But the show-member of the family was Alexander: "those who served in the first Burmese War felt a pride in the splendid Horse Artilleryman, whose fine figure was set off to advantage by the tall military head-dress of that day, the Greek helmet. He and his troop captain, Thomas Lumsden—also from Aberdeen—were selected by Sir Archibald Campbell to accompany our Envoy to Amarapura as imposing specimens of British 'Devils,'" wrote his comrade, Sir Fred Abbott, R.E.

It is worth while, perhaps, to follow George Thomson's career a little closely; not only because of its intrinsic interest, and as an example of the splendid work done by the officers of the Bengal Engineers, but as a study in heredity, so closely parallel are the events in his life, and the manner in which he met them, with incidents in the life of his cousin in a younger generation, Alex Taylor, and the manner in which *he* met them, as will be shown. It is true that the cataclysms which wrecked the career of the elder man were absent from the life of his kinsman. Alex Taylor, however, had the good fortune to serve under men whose ability and character he revered; had the reverse been the case, those who knew him cannot doubt that he would have acted much as did his father's cousin.

George Thomson's earliest experiences of military service were gained during the first Burmese War (1824–1826), at the commencement of which he was employed in reconnoitring in front of the army, and in laying out the line of the road to be constructed by the Pioneers: very arduous and fatiguing work, for the forests were so thick and the rivers so muddy and deep, that travelling had to be done either on foot or in a canoe. The density of the morass-fed tropical undergrowth, moreover, made surprises from the enemy frequent, dangerous, and difficult to avoid.

When Arakan was taken, he was entrusted with the

housing of the Force, under the circumstances a task of extreme difficulty, for he could not speak a word of the language, and, being unable to secure the services of a single local carpenter, blacksmith, or mason, had to rely exclusively on untrained coolies. The mortality in the camp outside Arakan was prodigious. "This Division," he wrote on 14th October 1825, "has suffered more from the pestilential climate than it would have done in ten campaigns against the Burmese. On the 1st June it mustered 8000 effective men; on the 11th October there were not 500 left. 2000 are dead, 1000 gone away, and 4500 in hospital. Of 200 officers 28 are dead, and 120 away on sick leave . . . the cattle have suffered as much from the climate as the men . . . and the camp followers more severely, about half of them having died." Among the officers who succumbed to fever in this campaign were his brother, Alexander Thomson—the handsome gunner—and a young uncle of the future Alex Taylor's future wife, James Greene[1] (1805–1825).

On his return to India George Thomson was employed on the construction of the first 330 miles of the Grand Trunk Road which connects the Indian Ocean with the Passes of Afghanistan, the last reaches of which were made and completed nearly half a century later by his cousin in the next generation, Alex Taylor. Although admittedly a splendid worker, his relations with the Military Board under which he worked were extremely strained: hot-tempered, self-reliant, conscientious, and able, he had formed a poor opinion of the

[1] James Greene's epitaph in the South Park Street burial-ground at Calcutta suggests a charming personality:—

"His gallant conduct at Arakan
Gained him the respect of his corps;
And his amiable manners
Endeared him to his relations and friends."

character and ability of some of its members, and he was not a man who hid his opinions under a bushel.

In 1838 he was appointed Chief Engineer to the Army of the Indus during the first Afghan War. When the Force commanded by Sir John Keane reached the Indus at Bukkur—where an island divides the river into two channels, one of them 500 yards wide and the other 307, and both running like mill-streams—no sign was to be seen of the materials for the construction of a bridge of boats which the Political Agents had undertaken to collect there. The Chief Engineer and his subordinates were in a quandary: on the one hand was a rushing river, and on the other an army with artillery, heavy baggage, and elephants, which looked to them for carriage across the mighty waters; and there they stood, empty-handed—without boats, beams, planking, ropes, anchors, or any of the necessary paraphernalia of the bridge-builder. About them spread a vast sandy desert, sparsely dotted with mud villages, shaded by date-palms. Eight boats had been collected, and it was said that grass grew in the neighbourhood which could be made into ropes.

Nothing daunted, George Thomson bent himself to his task. By dint of long and arduous search, he and his subordinates succeeded in finding and seizing some 112 boats; they cut down, split, and planed the palm trees; mowed the grass, which they converted into cables and nets; cut down high brushwood, which they netted, loaded with tons of stone, and used as anchors; and, finally, even built furnaces and made nails. Having improvised and collected sufficient material, they anchored their boats in a line across the river, connected them with split palm trees, used as beams, nailed roadway-planks on to them, and in eleven days completed a very large military bridge, upon which they carried the army across the Indus.

"Thomson was justly praised for opening the campaign with a work of such ability and magnitude," writes Sir Henry Durand; "for to have bridged the Indus was at once impressive, and emblematic of the power and resources of the army which thus surmounted a mighty obstacle."

Nor was this the only occasion during this ill-fated campaign on which George Thomson stood between the British Army and disaster. When General Sir John Keane marched from Kandahar to Ghazni he was induced by his "Politicals" to move without siege-guns; they assured him that the place was contemptible from a military point of view, and would offer no resistance. "You may imagine our surprise and disgust," writes Thomson, "when we came in sight of Ghazni, and found that it was not a 'very weak place commanded by a hill,' but towered seventy feet above the plain, half a wall and half a height scarped, with a *faussebraye*, and a wet ditch. High above the town at one end rose the citadel, completely covering it from the fire of the range of hills to the North.

The Chief was perplexed, and the Politicals slunk back to their tents. . . . One of Dost Muhammad's sons was on our left, with a large body of horse; the country was rising all round; Dost Muhammad had left Kabul with 5000 men, and, on being reinforced by 3000 men, was prepared to attack us." No pleasant state of affairs.

Sir John sent, in this difficulty, for his Chief Engineer. Thomson advised immediate action as the only means of saving the situation. He undertook to explode the great gateway leading into the city, and thus to enable the General to assault the town. Sir John took his advice. "If we had failed, the army would have been in a very perilous situation. There were many shaky nerves in camp when they heard of what had been resolved," writes Thomson.

The Engineer officers present were Captain Thomson, Lieutenants Peat,[1] Durand,[2] M'Leod,[3] Pigou,[3] and James Broadfoot.[3] It was arranged that an explosion party led by Lieutenant Peat, supported by Lieutenants Durand and M'Leod, should advance at dawn, deposit twelve large bags of gunpowder at the foot of the gate, and blow it in; and that the army—rushing through the opening thus made—should then storm the city. Batteries were made, and the guns put into position during the night. The army then awaited dawn. The Eastern horizon was just light enough to show the hills in strong relief, when Peat's powder-party appeared, and was greeted by a volley from the garrison, to which the covering party, extended along the ditch, gave a warm reply. When Peat had adjusted the powder-bags at the foot of the gate, Durand, who was exposed to the full fire of the enemy, fired the train with the greatest coolness and self-possession; as the port-fire did not ignite readily, he knelt to blow on it, and, even when it was clear that it was alight, waited for a few seconds, to the intense anxiety of his comrades, to make sure that all was right, before he returned to cover.

James Broadfoot, who was in the batteries outside, writes: "A few minutes after [the powder-party had disappeared], a large volume of smoke rising above the walls and a rushing sound showed that the explosion had taken place. The head of the storming party now appeared. Brigadier Sale was doubtful whether to proceed or not. In this uncertainty I offered to go on, to see if the explosion had been effectual. Being allowed to do so, I ran in towards the gate; my anxiety to get on, and the constant whirring of the balls past my head, made every step appear a mile. A little further

[1] Lieutenant Peat died of the effects of wounds and exposure in 1848.
[2] The late Major-General Sir Henry Durand, C.B., K.C.S.I., R.E.
[3] All three killed in Afghanistan during the year 1841.

on, I got into the range of the camel battery, and had to creep along to avoid our own balls. At last I met Durand, and shouted twice 'Has it failed?' He called out 'No! no!' I then ran back so fast, shouting for the advance, that my breath was entirely taken away. Peat and M'Leod were stretched under a little tomb half way, the former groaning heavily; he had been rolled over and over by the explosion, and was much shattered."[1]

Meanwhile, Captain Thomson, outside the gateway with General Sale, was anxiously watching the progress of events. He writes: "Seeing the explosion, and not hearing the bugle, I got very anxious, left Brigadier Sale, . . . and ran to see what was the matter. There was a domed building inside the gate . . . so it was as dark as pitch inside. . . . I had the 'advance' sounded, and waited inside for Sale; it was while the rear of the advance was struggling through the gateway, that the Afghans made a rush from the ramparts above, . . . their cuts were easily warded off, but their weight upset us . . . as our footing was among rubbish. The cover of my cap was cut through, though I was not touched. One of the Europeans who fell across my leg was killed. Immediately, and before I could get clear of him, a dead Afghan fell across me. The Afghans cut up the rest of the light Company of the European regiment, including the officers who were bringing up the rear; they then commenced on the head of the Main Column, wounding Sale and several officers of the Queen's Royals[2] who led the column, and several of the men. I felt exceedingly uncomfortable whilst struggling to get

[1] *The Royal Bengal Engineers*, by Colonel Sir Edward Thackeray, V.C., K.C.B., R.E., Smith, Elder, 1900, pp. 51–52.

[2] The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment). This distinguished regiment was afterwards commanded (in 1909–1912) by Alex Taylor (b. 1862), son of the Alex Taylor to whom this memoir is devoted.

clear of the bodies above me, and the timber under me, whilst the sabres and the bayonets made a most unpleasant clashing in my ears. I thought a good many things in a short time. The bayonets had no chance against the swords, but the latter had no chance against the fire which opened on them from the rear, as soon as we got clear. This was the only serious opposition met with. . . . Had it not been for the surprise, and their supposing we had got in by magic, I have little doubt but that they would have tried our men to the utmost.

I returned to the camp with the rest of our Engineers quite tired out, and soon afterwards an aide-de-camp came in from the Commander-in-Chief to thank me for the plan and execution of the attack,[1] the success of which was certainly a most fortunate event, and relieved the army from a very awkward predicament."

The campaign over, "Ghazni-Thomson," as he was henceforth called, was forced, much against his will, to resume charge of the Delhi Division of Public Works under the very Military Board of the composition of which he had so highly disapproved. Circumstances which roused his ire came to his knowledge, and but a short time elapsed before he launched charges of official maladministration against this body. To his indignation, instead of receiving the support of the Government, he was reprimanded for the public-spirited course he had taken. Being unable to "stomach injustice," he immediately resigned his commission; and this in spite of the remonstrances of Lord Auckland, and of many other high officials by whom his services were greatly valued. And thus at the age of 41 he brought a military

[1] "It is not too much to say that the army owed its existence, and the Generals their successes and rewards, to Thomson. By no one were his merits more warmly recognised than by his Chief, Sir John Keane, afterwards Lord Keane of Ghazni," writes Sir Edward Thackeray.

career of brilliant promise to a premature end.[1] The chief notes of his personality were ability, generosity, independence of character, and a high and sensitive temper which made it impossible for him to brook injustice or interference: traits he shared with his Irish cousins.

To return to George Taylor. He had three sons:—Archibald, who entered the Army, George, and William. The latter—the father of the subject of this monograph—was brought up to no profession, it being understood that he was to inherit the fortune of his uncle, Alexander Taylor, R.E. These Taylors seem to have been warm-hearted, generous, not without charm, but difficult to live with, self-willed, quick to take offence, and not only prompt but tenacious in their resentments. William Taylor was a characteristic offshoot of the clan. Ugly, witty, and *petit maître au dernier point*, his self-will, eccentricities, and cleverness were the alternate despair and delight of the childless relatives who had practically adopted him. The relations of the uncle and nephew were not characterised by serenity: the one being autocratic, and the other sensitive and intolerant of control. A crisis at last occurred. Major Taylor entertained friends; in the course of the evening he asked his nephew to perform some trifling service for one of his guests. His tone, which was peremptory, offended the young man, who, instead of obeying his uncle's wish, rang for the servant, gave him the order, and left the house for ever. It was hoped that he would apologise, and that the uncle would forgive the somewhat unmannerly escapade, but both the lad and the old man were of the same unbending stuff, and, though sincerely attached to each other, their old relations were never resumed. Master William's inheritance passed into other hands. The young man, however,

[1] See Obituary Notice of George Thomson, R.E., in *Royal Engineer Journal*, April 1886, by Colonel Sir Henry Yule, K.C.S.I., C.B., LL.D., R.E.

kept a soft place in his heart for the relations with whom he broke, and in after years not only called his eldest child "Ann Bonner," the full name of the wife of the dead man who had disinherited him, but also named his eldest son, "Alexander," after him. As he grew older he grew wiser and more self-controlled, but *au fond* he changed but little.

His young wife died in consequence of a carriage accident, in 1833, leaving him with five little children, of whom the youngest, Henry,[1] was only three years old. He never recovered from this sorrow. Like most Celts, he had been subject from his childhood to alternating periods of elation and depression; the latter now took the upper hand; reserved and moody, he withdrew into his shell, eschewed society, receiving only those male friends whose bright wits struck sparks from his own, or who were associated with him in forwarding some of his many interests.

Though possessed of some private means, the loss of the expected inheritance made it necessary that he should do some regular work. The profession towards which every member of his family seems to have had a natural bias was Engineering, combined, if possible, with adventure; it was towards this that he now turned, not however as a scientific art, but as a speculation, and as an instrument towards furthering certain social and economic public ends which were the chief interest of the little group of Scotch men—his father and uncles—in the midst of which he had grown up. In 1833 he entered into partnership with Sir John MacNeill, a celebrated engineer of the day, and made his headquarters in London. This arrangement did not work satisfactorily, however, and he brought it to an end in 1838, returning to Dublin, where he devoted himself heart and soul to further-

[1] Afterwards Colonel Henry Hartley Taylor, Northumberland Fusiliers, father of the late Lieutenant Archibald Taylor, 5th Panjab Cavalry, who died at Dera Ghazi Khan in 1898, aged 26.

ing the introduction into Ireland of the new steam locomotion, the use of which he confidently expected would launch his native country on a new era of prosperity.

Ardent a supporter of the new mode of progression as was William Taylor, he was not blind to the fact that the opening of railways would be a death-blow to his roads viewed as highways of commerce; for a second time in his life he saw an apparently-assured income about to slip through his fingers, this time through no fault of his own. Nothing daunted, however, he lost no time in seizing the bull by the horns, associated himself enthusiastically with the cause of railways in Ireland, working with special energy on behalf of the construction of the lines destined to open up the country lying between Dublin and Wexford, and Dublin and Cork. He especially busied himself with the acquirement, on behalf of the Company formed for the creation of these railways, of the lands through which they were to pass; a task for which he was peculiarly fitted, for his connection with the roads destined to be superseded had familiarised him with the country-side, many of its chief landed proprietors were his friends, and some of them connected with him by marriage. To the energy, tact, and enthusiasm with which he prosecuted this difficult work was largely due the rapidity with which, in spite of almost disabling difficulties, the scheme was carried through, and the Great Southern and South-Western Railway of Ireland opened.[1]

This Railway was his passion. He worked for it *con amore* from the day when it was but a project in a few eager minds to the day of his death in 1870. An ardent worker,

[1] When "Ghazni-Thomson" came home in 1840 with a broken career, and a heart full of bitterness against a Government which had certainly handled him badly, William Taylor realised of what value his cousin's ability, energy, and probity would be to his railway; interested him in it; and, finally, on the retirement of one of its directors, Colonel Sir Henry Jones, R.E., procured his election to the vacant post.

an eccentric solitary with the tastes of a scholar, a man of moods, at times of impenetrable reserve but at others of engaging sociability, he endeared himself to a small group of friends by his wit, his sincerity, and by an almost quixotic generosity, which made him the champion of all who were at a disadvantage, more especially if they were women, his relation to all of whom was idealised by the ever-living memory of his own married happiness into something even finer and more poetical than an Irishman's instinctive chivalry.

His house, however, was no home for little children. His eldest son, Alexander, the subject of this memoir (born 27th January 1826), who was seven years old at the time of his mother's death, never forgot the atmosphere of the big motherless building in which he and his brothers and sister lived, in fear, almost, of their inaccessible, irritable father, who understood nothing of their lives, and whose tense nerves were exasperated by the smallest noise. He was not always at home, however, and in his absence the boys ran riot over the house. They were often sent to the country to stay with their mother's sisters—Mrs Rainsford of Rainsford Lodge, Co. Kildare, and Mrs Saunders of Golden Fort, Co. Wicklow, whose elderly husband, General Saunders,[1] had been a well-known *viveur* in his day. Neither their uncles nor their aunts seem to have troubled their heads about the children's education; they and their many cousins were allowed to run wild over the country-side, fishing, bathing, and encounters with "town boys" being their chief recreations. Their odd father, however, although he had so little emotional contact with them, had their best interests at heart, and was already putting himself into possession of the views and theories of

[1] Son of Lady Martha Stratford, daughter of the Earl of Aldborough, and Morley Saunders of Saunders Grove, Co. Wicklow.

the continental educationalists of the day, on which he afterwards took the unusual course of acting.

In 1836, he transferred his home from Dublin to London, settling in Connaught Place, Hyde Park—then on the outskirts of London—in order that the children should enjoy the fresh air and freedom of the Park.

In the following year, Alex had the good fortune to see the Queen ride by on the day of her coronation. Disdaining the safe and excellent view provided by the nursery windows of his own home, he succeeded in slipping out of the house unobserved, and in joining the vast throng which had gathered about the Marble Arch to witness the procession. He was a little fellow and could see nothing at first; someone, however, gave him a helping hand, and he succeeded in clambering on to a pillar, from the top of which he commanded an excellent view. The youth of the girl-Queen and the immensity of the crowd were the two lasting impressions left on him by the events of the day.

A few months later (1838) he was suddenly told that he was going to school in Switzerland. A great adventure.

At that date a revolution, inaugurated by Jean Jacques Rousseau, and completed by Pestalozzi, had been accomplished in the theory of the education of children. They were no longer looked on as malleable raw material, which, like the potter's clay, might be moulded into *any* form, but as living organisms, bound to evolve in obedience to the laws of their own being. In every young human creature the will to live, and the consciousness of the power to achieve are coupled with ignorance of the world and of its own faculties; it was felt that the teacher's chief duty was to observe the child whose equipment for life he had undertaken, to help it to realise the character of its own abilities, and to remove the obstacles obstructing their growth, obstacles often inherent in the nature of the young

thing itself, and also, of course, to aid it to gain possession of the keys without which it would be excluded from the treasure-houses in which the best experiences of the human race are garnered. Sympathy and knowledge were the key-notes of the new pedagogics. Schools in which these conceptions found practical embodiment sprang up all over the Continent, and it was to these that William resolved to confide all his boys.

His father's connection with great engineering works had brought him into contact with men whose chief aim in life was to develop the material resources of their country, and thus to form a *milieu* favourable to the growth of civilisation; his own connection first with roads and then with railways—the main arteries of commerce—had kept his mind fixed on the same point—the promotion of the well-being of a country by facilitating the circulation of its material wealth. The atmosphere in which his youth had been spent, and the aims and aspirations with which he was familiar had made him sensitive, therefore, to the appeal of an attempt which was then being made in Switzerland, so to educate children of all classes as to make them, not professors, but public-spirited, practical citizens. This ideal was the inspiration of an elder contemporary of noble German extraction, Freiherr von Fellenberg, who, having received a special training from a philanthropic father, had determined to devote his life and fortune to the furtherance of education and social reform, and to the improvement of agriculture.

Herr von Fellenberg realised that nothing could be done with adults, and that the future lay with the children; they, therefore, were the centre of his activities; and not the children of one class only: he turned his attention to the representatives of the world of the future in its three divisions —(1) the Aristocrats, *i.e.* those who order or govern; (2)

the Middle-class, whose industry and intelligence create the wealth of the community; and (3) the Proletariat, on the work of whose hands that wealth is based. He founded three schools on his estate at Hofwyl, near Berne, for these three categories of future citizens. In 1808 he received some forty children of gentlepeople into his own house for purposes of education; they had their meals with his family, and were in daily and hourly contact with himself, his wife, and children. The large fees they paid were put to the credit of such of his other institutions as would certainly never pay their way. Two years later he opened a second school for some one hundred children whose parents were too poor to contribute anything towards the expense of the education of their offspring; the young people received into it were trained to earn their livelihood by the skilled work of their hands. Twenty years elapsed before he was able to complete the proposed cycle of these institutions by opening a school for children belonging to the poorer *bourgeoisie*, whose parents were unable to defray the *whole* cost of their education, but were able to contribute something towards it; these children were brought up to skilled trades and to such professions as needed but a short training.

The system on which all three schools were conducted was identical, as was the teaching given in all the elementary classes; as the children grew older, however, a process of differentiation—which had reference to the places in life they would eventually fill—necessarily began. The children in all three schools were in contact with each other; they all worked, together, and separately, in the workshops and agricultural institutes to which reference has been made.

Herr von Fellenberg's aim being to aid his children to grow into valuable citizens, he devoted himself, in the first

instance, to the development of their characters through their imaginations and wills, and to helping them so to educate and discipline their senses, as to make these the reliable instructors and servants of their understandings. No *à priori* appeal was made to the intelligence until later.

The foundation of his educational system was religion, man's relation to God. From the beginning he was careful to impress the imagination of his young pupils with the consciousness of the all-pervading presence and directing power of God, and of the largeness of the arc of human life, rising from the unknown and sinking back into it. He spared no pains to make religion the basis of their lives, being persuaded that nothing makes more for ideality, purity, and dignity of action than conscious reliance on God's power and goodness, and a humble desire to co-operate with the Divine designs. He was convinced, also, that the religious habit of mind is essentially a "means of grace": men "touch God's right hand in the darkness, and are lifted up and strengthened."

Closely connected with religion in Fellenberg's teaching was altruism—love of man as the natural outcome of the love of a common Creator. His own life was a practical example of this ideal. The existence of the children living in his house was based on the idea of mutual service, and not on that of rivalry:—nothing of the nature of competition—no rewards, and no punishments—was admitted into his scheme. If anyone did badly, he evidently needed help; if well, what greater reward could he have than his own efficiency? Human beings, and more especially children, live by admiration and love; these powers were directed on to a high plane by Fellenberg by means of the heroic poetry in which German literature is so rich, of which the children learned classic examples, literally,

"by heart," and recited publicly on great occasions; thus insensibly forming a taste for literature and a passion for noble action.

To this awakening and training of the intuitions, the imagination, and the will, was added the scientific education of the senses. Great pains were taken to develop and train these the only channels through which human beings make and receive communications with the world outside themselves. The child was taught to *see* accurately, to form a clear idea of the form and function of the objects seen, and to give external expression to the notions thus obtained in two mediums:—in that of clear and simple speech, and in that of the imitative arts, drawing or painting. In the latter, accuracy of observation, and not only grace of presentment, was aimed at; the children were encouraged to measure the objects they drew, thus acquiring a notion of the three dimensions, and of relative proportions. Associated with this training of the eye was the study of elementary arithmetic and geometry, through which the little student was familiarised with ideas and forms which, of their essence, are eternally accurate and stable.

The sense of hearing was trained in a similar way. The child was taught to distinguish between natural sounds, the songs of various birds and the cry of animals, for instance; he was also taught to speak well, to enunciate with clearness and precision, to modulate his voice in the mode desired, to "jodel," to whistle, to sing simple *volks-lieder*, and hymns; and, if sufficiently musical, to play some easy musical instrument, such as an elementary kind of flute. Importance was attached, above all, to chorus-singing, with which marching and rhythmic movements of the body were associated, and to dramatic recitation—recitation combined with gesture—which was rightly looked on as an especially indispensable element in the training of the children born into the ruling

caste, to whom in after life, as governors, or councillors, the power of easy and persuasive public speech would be an asset second in importance only to that of clear thought. Naturally associated with dramatic recitation was dancing, the regulated rhythmic speech of the body. The children were taught country-dances, reels, and the like, and, eventually, such courtly dances as gavottes and minuets ; moreover, on festal occasions they performed regular concerted "pieces," or ballets, the most accomplished of their number being chosen to execute the *pas seul*. This, the flower of their physical education, grew on a sound general training of the body :—gymnastics, single-stick, fencing, riding, skating, running, boating, and long country walks were part of the recognised school routine. Gardening, too, was encouraged, each of the boys having a little plot of ground, which he cultivated himself, under advice, but according to his own ideas.

With this training, which was carried to a high level of proficiency in the case of the inmates of Herr von Fellenberg's own house, was associated that of the workshops, in which the boys learned to handle tools in a workman-like way, to use their hands neatly and cleverly, to understand machinery, and to acquire a professional standard of handiwork ; for the workshops did not exist primarily for the boys, but were places where all the work connected with the machinery and carpentry of the estate was done. The boys, moreover, learned there to know and respect the skilled artisan, both as a man and as a passed master of his craft.

The plan of education thus slightly sketched was that adopted with the younger children ; it was developed rather than changed for the older boys ; the training of the physique and of the emotions dropped gradually more and more into the background, and the appeal to the abstract intelligence

became more direct and constant. As time went on, moreover, and experiment—success and failure—exposed the direction and calibre of the boy's faculties, specialisation with a view to some definite career began. Finally, the boy, thoroughly and efficiently equipped, left Hofwyl for the University, where he came into contact with famous experts and scholars, and out of which he passed into the world of independent action and thought, ready to play a rôle in life.

The house in which Herr von Fellenberg and his family lived, and in which he received his young guests, was a fine country mansion, admirably placed on high land and commanding an extensive view of mountain, valley, lake, and river. It had been largely extended, and was furnished with simplicity and dignity. Associated with it were playgrounds, gymnasiums, etc.; and near it were the workshops.

The soul of the place was its founder, Herr von Fellenberg, who, when Alex Taylor was put into his hands in 1838, was a venerable white-bearded man of sixty-seven years of age. He was in constant contact with the boys in his own house, read prayers with them in the morning and evening, had his meals with them, and saw them at intervals throughout the day, as occasion permitted. "A grand old man, whom we all loved," wrote his grateful pupil of him sixty years later.

It was to this ideal training-ground that Alex Taylor—fresh from the lonely house in Connaught Place, where the children had to invent their own amusements and take care that they were not noisy, and from the wild freedom of the long days at his aunts' country homes in Ireland—was brought by his father, who doubtless went over the establishment with great interest, Herr von Fellenberg's ideals, and the means by which he sought to

attain them, being those which had haunted his own family for generations.

Alex was twelve years old when he was transplanted to Hofwyl—a little older than Herr von Fellenberg would have wished—and remained there till he was fifteen—leaving before Herr von Fellenberg wished—three years, to which he always looked back as among the happiest of a happy life. The language of the place was German, of which he knew not a word; he picked it up quickly, however, and took to the life as a duck takes to water, rising rapidly to a position of mark in the school, more especially—it appears—in bodily exercises. He was one of the best gymnasts of the place, a notable skater, a good rider, and so excellent a dancer that he was chosen to perform the *pas seul* in the school ballets! He was also one of those selected to recite publicly. He excelled as a carpenter. A large square veneered box, inlaid with divers woods and furnished with complicated fittings, made by him at Hofwyl, still exists, and is as perfect as it was when it issued complete from his proud young hands nearly three-quarters of a century ago; an excellent piece of workmanship of which any cabinet-maker might be proud. He was devoted to skating and fencing, but more especially to boating—still his favourite amusement when his life's work was over, and he came to anchor in England.

He had good abilities, and probably did well in purely intellectual studies, but of these he never spoke in after years; and, as there were no classes, no competitions, and no examinations at Hofwyl, it is difficult to form an opinion of his status in this respect. He never went home, or saw any home-faces during these three years. In the holidays he and other boys, accompanied by a tutor, went for walking tours, sleeping, not in hotels, but in cottages, and making on occasion as many as forty-two

miles a day, and this on rough mountain-ground, and with knapsacks on their backs. Not a bad "record" for boys in their teens.

In the summer of 1841 he returned to Ireland, at his father's wish. The latter seems to have recalled him without reference to any plan for his future, for he was allowed to idle through the summer and autumn, and was eventually launched into Addiscombe without any special preparation, two months after the term had commenced, at the bottom of a list of thirty entries. The low place he took is not surprising in view of the fact that he barely understood English and spoke it badly; English modes of work and expression, moreover, were new to him.

The three years in Switzerland were the most crucial of his life: it was there that he was subjected to influences which, co-operating with his natural tendencies, formed the man of the future. In many important respects his character and tastes never lost the direction given them by Herr von Fellenberg. The simple undogmatic puritanism which was part of the very warp and woof of his personality was largely the result of the training at Hofwyl; so, also, was the more than usual horror with which he regarded anything like personal ambition, rivalry, or competition—a horror unintelligible to those brought up in the English competitive system. His attitude towards "honours" may be traced to the same source:—his boyish conscience had realised that the opportunity to do the right and useful thing is an honour granted by Heaven to its elect; the association of a material advantage with this high privilege jarred on him as a moral anti-climax. This fine ideal was one to which he always instinctively held.

Other valuable heritages from Hofwyl were his physical agility, strength, and powers of endurance, and his trained

powers of swift and accurate observation and presentment. The precision of his speech is to be traced to this early training; though never a stylist, he was always a carefully accurate speaker. Those who knew him will remember the care with which he searched for such words and phrases as were the correct verbal equivalents of the thing he wanted to describe, and the number of nouns and adjectives he would reject before he found those which he ultimately accepted.

Among the benefits of which he was the recipient at Hofwyl, not the least was the training of mind and *hand* he received in its mechanical workshops, a training which would have been denied him at any English public school. Those skilled hands of his, and the habit of using them were invaluable to him in his after life in the wilds of Northern India. Not only could he conceive and direct, he could also make. He knew precisely how his mechanical ideas could be translated into concrete facts.

Such a training, added to the heredity of a long ancestry of men who were either soldiers or engineers, or both, made the choice of his subsequent profession almost inevitable.

As has been stated, he did not distinguish himself, at first, at Addiscombe. This, in view of his antecedents, is quite intelligible: German was the language he habitually spoke; he was, moreover, put "out of step," by the sudden change to the lonely freedom of an English College from the busy routine at Hofwyl, where, though there appeared to be no rules and little compulsion, the current of ordered life ran strongly between carefully built embankments. Nor was it only the difficulty of the unaccustomed language and ways which disconcerted him; his previous training had not been designed, as had that of his companions, to support the superstructure of the Addiscombe curriculum:—he knew much of which his fellows were ignorant, and was

ignorant of much that they knew. So, on going to College he "lost his bearings" for the time being, and idled delightfully; shining always, however, in games and physical exercises. He distinguished himself in the gymnasium, performed exceptional feats of running and jumping, and was introduced to the very rough football of the day in which he made quite a reputation, being known at both Addiscombe and Chatham as the "Football King."

Time passed; short was the period which separated him from the final examination which was to determine the direction of his future life, and he was still idling—his name figuring always somewhere near the bottom of the list. His two chief friends, "Dan" Robinson,[1] and "Charlie Hutch,"[2] reproached him in the most forcible language with the imbecility of his course. They were spirited young men who enjoyed life; but, nevertheless, stood high in the term. Eventually, however—only a little while before the time of training and probation came to an end—a light rose on him; he suddenly devoted himself to work, and succeeded in exchanging his number of 30th for 4th. This change of place put him into the ranks of the Bengal Engineers, and launched him on the career to which he was predestinated by the activities of generations of his forebears, by his own character and abilities, and by the Hofwyl training. His friends Dan Robinson and Charles Hutchinson came out 1st and 2nd. "Well for you," he used to say in after years, laughing, as he shook his first finger at them—"Well for you, that I did not begin to work sooner, or you would have been nowhere!"

[1] The late Major-General Daniel George Robinson, R.E. In 1863–65 acting Superintendent of Great Trigonometrical Survey, and Deputy Surveyor-General. 1865, Director-General of Indian Telegraphs. Represented the Government of India at the International Telegraph Conference at Rome and St Petersburg. Died at sea near Aden, 1877, aged 51.

[2] The late General Charles Waterloo Hutchinson.

The 3rd was George Fulton,[1] afterwards one of the ablest and most gallant of the defenders of Lucknow.

His life at Chatham was exceedingly happy. The work—which was not excessive—was to his liking; as was also the play, chiefly boating and football. His dignity as a British officer was evidently another source of pleasure. A letter to his sister written, in an unformed boyish hand, from the Brompton Barracks, in 1843—when he was seventeen—shows that the nature of boys has not changed much since then. After describing the daily routine, and the glories of "late dinner," he adds: "It is only the Engineer officers who mess and work together; the officers of the Line are far below us, and their pay is 5s. 7d. a day. The only thing we do together is to row races, when we generally beat them." He then describes a three-mile race between the Engineers and the 58th, past Rochester and Chatham, in which the Engineers, "of course," won by nearly fifty yards, greatly to the chagrin of their opponents.

Alex had not only his fill of rowing at Chatham, but also of sailing, to which the wide flat reaches of the river—still innocent of the steamer—were a constant invitation. He and his old Addiscombe chum, Dan Robinson, spent many a long day afloat, their bark sometimes surging through the water before a fresh breeze, sometimes lying motionless on a mud-bank, while the lads either talked and lazed, or, turning up their trousers, waded in the slush and mud to push it off. Many were their adventures and hair-breadth escapes. "On Thursday," Alex Taylor writes, in the letter already quoted, "I went in the sailing boat about twenty miles up the river, and back again"; adding, "I

[1] "A man unsurpassed in his profession; supremely daring, and ever courting danger. . . . His death, occurring but eleven days before the Relief, was acutely felt and lamented by all."—Kaye and Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny*: Cabinet edition, W. H. Allen, 1889, iii. pp. 324 ff.

don't believe I have mentioned that Thursday is generally given us for amusements, unless something particular is going on."

Happy Thursdays. Long, glad, idle Thursdays, during which the growing lad stored health and energy for the hard days that were to be, and during which he acquired knowledge which was to enable him to seize the first rung of the ladder of his professional life in India, as will be seen.

CHAPTER II

ARRIVAL IN INDIA—FIRST SIKH WAR

In the autumn of 1844, the year in which he left Chatham, Alex Taylor embarked for Calcutta, in one of Green's sailing ships, the *Windsor Castle* (800 tons), a voyage which then took three months to perform. His chief friend on board, Charles Robert Lindsay[1] of the Civil Service, often spoke with admiration in after years of the rôle played by the young Irishman during the one incident of the voyage—a really dangerous storm.

Being a sailor by instinct, Taylor soon won his way into the friendship of the Captain of the ship, was initiated by him into the art of steering a large craft, and, to his great delight, was eventually allowed to take long spells at the wheel. When a heavy storm broke on the ship in mid-ocean, the Captain sent for the lad—he was then eighteen years of age—and asked him to help the quarter-master to steer; this he did so steadily and with such judgment, throughout the three days during which the storm raged, and the safety of the vessel and its passengers was at stake, that, when the danger was over, the Captain thought it right to tender him public thanks. The *Windsor Castle*

[1] "Pretty Lindsay"—so called on account of his extreme good looks—a scion of the great Scottish clan, was Taylor's life-long friend; he was afterwards (1870–1880) a Judge of the Chief Court of the Panjab, and father of "the beautiful Lady Temple"—wife of the first Sir Richard Temple—and Mrs Charles Buckland.

reached Calcutta in January 1845, not having touched land once during the more than twelve weeks' voyage.

He was attached on arrival for some months to the office of Colonel Godfrey Greene, R.E.,[1] Secretary to the Military Board, an officer respected all over India for his ability, and loved for his gentleness, his graceful but caustic wit, and for the warmth of the hospitality which he and his wife lavished on all their many friends, indeed, but, more especially, on the inexperienced subalterns who made their youthful débuts in India under their kind auspices. Alex Taylor endeared himself to them by his boyish *joie de vivre*, and was one of their special favourites. His escapades, and the light-hearted Irish devilry with which he invested everything he did, kept Mrs Greene—a gentle early-Victorian lady, with white sloping shoulders and blonde ringlets—in perpetual anxiety; she asked him to the house, she used to declare laughingly, merely to keep him out of danger for a few hours at least.

While in Calcutta, he became acquainted with certain of the officers under whom he afterwards served, among them, Colonel John Cheape[2] of his Corps. He also learned something of the language and habits of the people, and of the ways of Anglo-Indian life; and, at the Secretariat, obtained a general insight into the character and scope of the work in which he was soon to take part.

Shortly after his arrival he received a cheque from his father for £100, which, in addition to his pay and to what he had been given already, enabled him to buy a horse, and other necessaries. Although the purchasing power of money was greater in those days than it is now, and though his tastes were very simple, it will surprise no one to hear that the tide of his finances soon stood at a very low ebb.

[1] With whom he was afterwards connected by marriage.

[2] Afterwards General Sir John Cheape, G.C.B. (*Bengal Engineers*).

In July he received orders to join the headquarters of the Sappers at Meerut. He went by steamer to Allahabad, and thence by dâk (posting) to Meerut, giving his last coin, a piece of silver, as a tip to the driver at the foot of the long flight of steps leading to the Sapper mess-house. It amused him, in after years, to recall the horror which possessed his soul when he found himself joining his regiment, unknown, and, literally, penniless. He had an idea—baseless, of course—that he would have to treat everyone all round, and perhaps make a speech. "Here's a go; but let's hope they'll give me tick!"—these were the words in which he voiced both his dismay and the hope that gave it relief.

Two months later a Company of Sappers was ordered to Ferozpur. The officer to whom the command of this Column naturally fell was just engaged to be married to a local beauty, and therefore readily forwarded Taylor's proposal to take his place; a proposal which was accepted by the authorities only on condition that he first qualified himself for the post by passing the Vernacular Lower Standard; this he succeeded in doing in a fortnight, and marched to Ferozpur on the 10th of October 1845, in command of a Company of Native Sappers and Miners.

Before leaving Meerut he had to borrow money with which to buy a small tent and pony; fortunately, not long after he had completed this transaction he received a second cheque from his father, which enabled him to discharge this the only debt he ever contracted. This was the last remittance he received from home. The question of an allowance was never raised. He was no letter-writer, neither was his father; the relations between them, moreover, never very intimate, had been weakened by the boy's long absences, first at Hofwyl, and then at Addiscombe and Chatham; his three brothers were away from home—

one had been sent to sea, and the other two were being educated in France—and thus, gradually, except for occasional letters to his sister, communications between the motherless lad in India and his family were reduced to a minimum. He and his father wished each other well, but they rarely exchanged letters.

Ferozpur—his goal—was a lately established military outpost, near the Sutlej, then the Northern boundary of British India.

The then condition of the Panjab, lying on the other side of that river, is not intelligible without some knowledge of the early history of the Province.

From about 2000 B.C. to the time of the Muhammadan invasions the religion of India was Hinduism—a creed introduced by the pastoral Aryan invaders of the Peninsula, and gradually modified by Brahmanism and Buddhism. Essentially a transcendental cosmic philosophy, it is based on the conception of matter as fundamentally illusory, and on that of the immanence in all things of the Divine Being, absolute union with whom is the goal of existence. Its leading social feature—caste—was originally the outcome of the determination of a fine conquering race to keep itself free from contaminating contact—not merely physical, but mental also—with the inferior peoples in the midst of whom it had settled, and whom it had determined to use as serfs. The division of society into hereditary sections corresponding to pursuits is common to all civilisations in certain phases of their evolution; what was peculiar to Hinduism was the inflexible character of these divisions, and also the religious bases—the doctrine of Karma, the law of retribution, and that of re-incarnation—on which they gradually came to rest, and by which they are justified. A religion of so philosophic and transcendental a character is peculiarly liable to sink in the hands

of the ignorant or vicious into pantheism, polytheism, and idolatry, and it did in fact so sink. Its debasement was accelerated by its fusion, at the bottom of the scale, with elementary indigenous superstitions—animism, magic, devil-worship, and the like: the result being that side by side with Hinduism proper, which is the noble expression of the religious and social ideals of a subtle, speculative, and deeply religious people, stands a debased and spurious popular Hinduism — pantheistic, polytheistic, idolatrous, priest-ridden, caste-bound, and laden with superstitious rites and observances.

On the rise of Muhammadanism,[1] however, the life of mystic and idolatrous India was rudely broken in upon by incursions of fanatical and iconoclastic Moslems of non-Aryan descent—Turks, Afghans, and Mongolians—who, surging into the Peninsula through its North-Western mountain-passes, swept—the sword in one hand, the Koran in the other—from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and from the mouth of the Indus to that of the Ganges. These invasions were sometimes mere raids, the raiders withdrawing, however, only to return again, for the rich cities of Hindustan were mines of wealth which they pillaged without scruple; the more frequent outcome of these incursions, however, was either the formation of tributary States—Viziers being left to exploit the conquered Provinces—or the foundation of dynasties, which, alien to the local population, formed and upheld by the power of the sword, usually succumbed when that sword passed into incompetent keeping. The new hand which gripped it, however, was invariably that of a disciple of the Prophet. Delhi, for instance, witnessed an unbroken succession of Muhammadan dynasties for upwards of 750 years.

With the exception of certain Mughal Emperors,

[1] Muhammad, 570–632 A.D.

—notably of Akbar, who was a religious eclectic, and not only a great conqueror, but a great administrator—these Muhammadan invaders were merciless and fanatical adventurers, who imposed their religion at the point of the sword and robbed and violated temples on principle.

What could be the outcome of this long struggle between the followers of religions which were the expressions of incompatible temperaments, but hatred—hatred, on the one hand, for the brutal, cow-killing, meat-eating conqueror, with his fanatical intolerance and childishly unphilosophic creed; and hatred on the other, for the subtle and often idolatrous infidel?[1]

Between the North-Western passes of the Himalayas and Delhi—the usual goal of India's Northern invaders—lies the great Plain of the Five Rivers—the Panjab—across which these Muhammadan marauders, horde after horde, rode through the centuries, burning and pillaging as they marched Southward, and across which they returned on their homeward way, laden with plunder.

The Panjab proper was peopled chiefly by Jats and Rajputs, with a substratum of aborigines; its main religion, therefore, was Hinduism. It contained, however, a certain number of Muhammadans, the result of immigration, or of *force majeure*; for the Province usually lay under the rule, either of the Muhammadan representatives of the Moslem powers at Delhi, or of those on the further side of its mountain-frontier—Afghan, Persian, or Turcoman, as the case might be. Its position, midway between Kabul and Delhi, made it strategically important. Whatever Powers

[1] This hatred—born of differences of race and faith, and fed by the passions and despair of centuries—still divides the population of India into two great camps, of which the Hindus form the larger body:—Hinduism, with its cognate faiths—Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—numbering (in 1911) some 232,570,993 souls, while Muhammadanism can count only 66,647,299.

were paramount, it always lay between the hammer and the anvil, the duties of its raiders and of its rulers alike being generally confined to exploitation. Its local life meanwhile ran its normal course: its Chiefs cherished their common Hinduism, and maintained an internecine warfare, uniting only to meet a common foe—much as did the Highlanders of Scotland. They had their small private troubles, but all those on an imperial scale were of Muhammadan origin. The bitter experiences of generations worked two passions into the very warp and woof of its life: one being the longing to strike the aggressive persecutor of alien race and religion by whom it was frequently harried and constantly exploited, in his chief seat, Delhi, if possible; and the other, to loot the Muhammadan capital, with the sight of the fabulous spoil of which its inhabitants were familiar.

Shortly before the time of Babar—the founder of the Mughal dynasty—Nanak (1469–1538), a man of religious genius, a reformer, and quietist saint, was born in the Panjab; and—such is the irony of fate—was the ultimate means of transforming a mere congeries of clans unconnected by the ties of blood, into a warlike anti-Muhammadan *nation*.

The hunger of Nanak's soul for God was unsatisfied by the teaching of current polytheistic, caste-bound Hinduism; nor were its cravings appeased by the anthropomorphic creed of Muhammad. Devoting himself to prayer, contemplation, study, and good works, he succeeded in penetrating behind the forms of both these religions to the truths which animate them—he realised that God is One, that earthly distinctions fall into nothingness in the world of the spirit, and that a pure heart and noble deeds, rather than rites and ceremonies, bring men into contact with the divine.[1]

[1] Sikhism prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, class-exclusiveness (caste), the concremation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine and

Although this teaching is incompatible with polytheism, caste, and sacerdotalism—the hall-marks of popular Hinduism—Nanak was never persecuted. His gracious personality, humility, and holiness won the day; he attacked nothing; he merely showed a more excellent way.[1] Muhammadans looked on him as an Islamite in heart; his own countrymen received his teaching enthusiastically, and formed themselves into a brotherhood of his disciples—Sikhs.[2]

On his death the leadership of his Sikhs passed into other and less spiritual hands. Under the pressure of persecution the confraternity took on a martial character, and gradually the relation of the Sikhs to their Guru—like that of mediæval Christians to the Holy Father—assimilated itself more and more to that of retainers towards a feudal lord. More than 150 years after its foundation its changed spirit made a new vehicle for itself: this was largely the fruit of circumstances, and of the character and genius of a strong man, Govind Singh.

The Mughal Emperor and Suzerain of the Panjab, the fanatical Moslem, Aurungzeb, called the Sikh Guru of his day, Tegh Bahadur, to Delhi, in his capacity of a feudal chieftain, and had him executed there as an infidel. Tegh Bahadur's son and successor, Guru Govind Singh (1675–

other intoxicants, tobacco, infanticide, slander, and pilgrimages to the sacred wells and tanks of the Hindus. It inculcates loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty, and all the moral and domestic virtues upheld by Christianity. It teaches the Transmigration of the Soul and Predestination, and maintains the eternal right of every man to search for divine knowledge and to worship his Creator. Sayings of Guru Nanak: "If anyone treat you ill, bear it. If you bear it three times, God Himself will fight for you, and humble your enemies." "God will not ask man of his birth; he will ask him what he has done." "They are not suttees who perish in the flames; suttees are they that die of a broken heart." —Article on Sikhism, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition.

[1] See *The Sikh Wars*, by General Sir Charles Gough, V.C., G.C.B., and Arthur Innes, M.A.: A. D. Innes & Co., London, 1897, pp. 16 ff.

[2] Sikh = disciple.

1708), burning with indignation, both as a son and as a disciple, gave Nanak's followers a new constitution. He converted the great Guru's quietest children—who under the pressure of Muhammadan intolerance had already armed themselves in self-defence—into an organised army of men not only able to defend themselves, but to *attack* the immemorial enemies of their faith and race. This military unit, which he called the Khalsa—the Pure, or Free—was entered by a ceremonial ritual in which water and a sword were the chief symbols. After the initiate had sworn to revere the memory of the Great Guru, Nanak, and of his successors, to defend their teaching concerning the unity of God and the universal brotherhood of man, the significant title of "Singh"—lion—was added to his name; he was promised freedom from reincarnation after the expiration of this earthly life, together with immediate participation in unconditioned bliss after death; and was reminded that the arch-enemy against whom he was armed was the Moslem, and more especially the Moslem ruler of Delhi.

Nanak's Sikhs had been a spiritual *brotherhood*; Govind Singh maintained this characteristic. No caste distinctions were recognised in his army. But though its members were equal, spiritually, the Khalsa was a strictly organised military body; military distinctions obtained, and military discipline was enforced, its constitution in this respect being somewhat similar to that of the Covenanters. Its new leader encouraged its members to eat meat in order to make themselves strong and of "lion-like courage"; he taught that the person of every Sikh should be given dignity by the expert bearing of arms, and promised glory to all brave soldiers who slew the enemies of their faith, and "despaired not, though overpowered by superior numbers."

History has shown again and again how great is the strength of a body of brave armed men animated by

patriotism and religious fervour; but, strong as was the Khalsa, the enemies with whom it had at first to contend were stronger. Its early history is dark with disaster. Govind Singh died by the hand of a Musalman assassin in 1708; his sons were murdered by the Musalman Governor of Sirhind; his successor—not as Guru, for that religious office died with him, but as leader of the Khalsa—fell into the hands of the Mughal's officers, and was put to death in 1715. The Khalsa was scattered; its members lived as outlaws in the fastnesses of the Panjab.

But in the eighteenth century the Empire of the Mughals was already moribund; one by one, its Trans-Indus Provinces threw off its yoke; its representatives in the Panjab intrigued in their own interests with Afghanistan, and with local Chieftains; Oudh, Bengal, and Rajputana offered a merely nominal allegiance; Central and Western India was practically in the hands of the bitterly hostile Hindu Mahratta Confederacy. In 1739, Nadir Shah of Persia broke through the frontier mountains, and sacked the Mughal capital, carrying away loot to the value of thirty-two crores of rupees. He was followed, sixteen years later, by Ahmad Shah, the Abdali, who, after several invasions of the Panjab, marching Southward, again despoiled the unhappy city, and put its inhabitants to the sword (1756). It was no part of his policy, however, to keep Delhi—which was of no use to him except as a source of wealth, for his interests lay on the further side of the Indus—he therefore withdrew, having taken the Mughal weakling on the throne under his protection, and having made his own son Governor of the Panjab.

The Mahratta Confederacy meanwhile grew in strength; the tide of its conquests rose to the banks of the Indus. With its aid, a *maire du palais* dominated, and then blinded the Mughal Emperor. The Abdali arose to avenge these

insults. Hindu and Muhammadan met on the plain of Panipat (1761). After desperate fighting, Muhammadanism won the day. The Mahrattas are said to have lost 200,000 men in the short campaign. This blow was final; it shattered the Mahratta Confederacy. As before, Ahmad Shah did not follow up his victory by founding an Indian dynasty—his presence was needed in Afghanistan—but again withdrew, leaving India prostrate, the Mahrattas crippled, the Mughal impotent, and the British power in Northern India unborn.

The peace of exhaustion which ensued gave the Sikhs their opportunity. The Khalsa revived. Not, however, as a whole. Every local Chieftain gathered his followers about him, and strove to enlarge his own territory; there was abundant internal dissension; the law of the survival of the fittest obtained, and the stronger absorbed the weaker. Each Khalsa leader sided, however, with the members of the brotherhood *as against an outsider*, with the result that before the century was out the Panjab was practically in the hands of a number of Sikh Chiefs, each of whom was the centre of a considerable body of followers.

One of these local magnates, Ranjit Singh (1780–1839)—a born leader, able, ambitious, unscrupulous, of indomitable courage, and iron will—was strong enough to organise this heterogeneous group of feudal lords and their turbulent followings into a nation—a people inspired by common ideals, and pursuing common ends—and to place himself at their head as Raja. He achieved this end largely by exploiting their religious passions and their enthusiasm for the Khalsa, in whose name and interest he made his every move.

Intrepid and astute as he was, Generalissimo of fine troops, master of Peshawar, the Mahratta Confederacy broken, and the Mughal Empire dropping to pieces before his eyes—the ball would have been at his feet had the

pieces on the board been those only with which earlier Native Princes had had to deal; the game, however, had been complicated by a new factor—the Britains.

In the past the conquerors of India had always burst into it from the North; the new tide of invasion, however, had arisen—carrying all before it—from the Southern Seas. The white faces had landed on the coast, not as conquerors, but as peaceful traders; fifty years after their entry into the political life of the Continent, the Northern boundary of their dominions was almost conterminous with the Sutlej, and they had taken the great Mughal under protection. The Lion of the Panjab—as Ranjit Singh was called—though illiterate, was exceedingly shrewd. A map of India was shown him on which the various States were so coloured as to show their political status. "What does the red mean?" he asked. "British possessions," was the reply. "It will soon be all red!" he exclaimed, as he turned away in disgust.

His actual attitude towards this rising power, however, was a proof of his political sagacity. Early in his career he recognised that the English were not only backed by a power with which the Sikhs could never cope, but had intrinsic qualities which ensured their ultimate victory. Though hardly pressed by his warlike followers—whose instinct would have led them to attack the invader—and sometimes sorely tempted by circumstances, he cultivated British friendship, and played the rôle of England's ally with loyalty and consistency.

His national policy was to accept the Sutlej as his Southern boundary, to consolidate his position within the Panjab, to extend his dominions—North, East, and West—at the expense of his *native* neighbours, and to form the magnificent fighting material at his disposal into an army after the European model—drilled, disciplined, and well provided

with artillery. With the help of Italian and French officers, —Avitabile, Ventura, Allard, and others—he reorganised his forces, brought their equipments up to date, provided them with heavy artillery, and succeeded in creating a fighting machine, which—when it was eventually launched against us—proved the most formidable enemy we ever met in India.

On his death in 1839 the Government of the great country he had created fell to pieces: the central Government and the Khalsa Army broke asunder. Rival competitors for the empty throne arose successively, and came to untimely ends. The civil Government fell at last into the hands of the Rani Jhindan, the low-caste mother of a child of doubtful parentage, said to be the son of the great Panjab Chief. Abandoning herself to pleasure, this Messalina of the East and her paramours exhausted the royal treasury; the Sirdars intrigued with each other and exploited the country; while the Khalsa Army, which made no pretence of loyalty to the Lahore Court—its loyalty was to itself—looked grimly on, unpaid, unoccupied, unhonoured. It was evident that, unless decisive steps were taken, the country must soon be torn by civil war.

The Rani and her advisers were astute, however, in their misguided way. Ranjit Singh had always deprecated any hostile movement against the British, on the ground of their invincibility. British prestige, however, had been rudely shaken by the disasters of the late Afghan War (1838–42), which had given Sikh opponents of a pro-Anglican policy reason to place their tongues in their cheeks. The Rani knew that an expedition against the English would be most popular with the Army, and she thought that it would also be a two-edged weapon in her hands—if the raid were successful, the army would be content, and its glory would be hers; if it failed, however, and the Army were destroyed,

she and her Government would have been freed from a thorn in their sides: so she argued. There were not wanting wiser heads in the Province who realised that the British Government would hold the Panjab "Durbar" responsible for the acts of the Panjab Army; and, if victorious, would probably annex the Province, and exile the Rani. Their counsels were disregarded. The Khalsa Army was urged to invade British territory, and preparations on a large scale were initiated.

In 1845 the Regular Panjab Army could bring 200 admirably served guns on to the field, 35,000 infantry (divided into 35 regiments, each 1000 strong), and 15,000 splendidly mounted cavalrymen, each of them a horseman from his cradle. To this large force were added the fine, if less disciplined, local levies of the Sirdars, estimated as trebling the numbers of the regular Infantry and Cavalry. This Army was broken into seven divisions, one of which was destined to remain at Lahore; one, to march to Peshawar; while five were to cross the Sutlej. Of all this the Governor-General was kept fully informed by Major George Broadfoot, the British Agent at Lahore.

Influenced, however, by recent events in Afghanistan and Sind, the Directors of the East India Company had determined to pursue a peaceful policy, and to avoid annexation. So stringent were the directions in this sense given to the Governor-General—Sir Henry Hardinge—that, although it was evident that at no distant date the Khalsa would pit its strength against that of the white faces across the Sutlej, he and Sir Hugh Gough, the Commander-in-Chief, refrained from massing troops on the frontier for fear of seeming to provoke a conflict. Having only 31,000 men, in all, with which to oppose a Khalsa Army variously estimated as from 100,000 to 150,000 strong, they were forced to content[1]

[1] See Map, Sikh Campaigns, facing p. 98.

themselves with placing 5000 men at Ludhiana, near the Sutlej, and 7000 at Ferozpur, a city close to the ford by which the Sikhs were sure to cross the river, and the most exposed of the British positions—of which 7000 men, it may be added, in passing, only 700 were Europeans. Their remaining 19,000 men they massed at Ambala and Meerut. Ferozpur, therefore—which was in imminent danger of being attacked by an overwhelming force,—was separated from its bases by 130, and 160 miles of desert. Not an enviable position.

These British posts were commanded by distinguished officers:—Brigadier Wheeler, subsequently so tragically connected with Cawnpore, Major-General Sir John Littler, and Major-General Walter Raleigh Gilbert. Sir Henry Hardinge was present in person. The prospective fighting was to be done at close quarters—much of it with the bayonet; the range of the Brown Bess, with which both armies were armed, was 300 yards, but disciplined troops usually withheld their fire until that distance was halved; the range of the Artillery was 300 yards also, for grape, and 800 for shot and shell. When the first breath of war reached Sir Henry Hardinge's ears, he ordered the flotilla of some forty bridge-boats, which Lord Ellenborough had had constructed at Bombay in view of just such a contingency, to be sent to Karachi, and thence up the Indus to Ferozpur.

Such was the position when Alex Taylor arrived at Ferozpur late in the autumn of 1845. The intricacies of the situation, however, were probably *terra incognita* to the newly-arrived lad of nineteen and his brother-subalterns who, doubtless, contented themselves with listening eagerly to all the sensational rumours which swept the large military station, and waited in excited expectation for the "big thing" which by all accounts was likely to "come on" soon,

and which would be for many of them their first experience of warfare.

Taylor's arrival at Ferozpur was shortly followed by that of the flotilla of bridge-boats. Boats attracted him as a magnet does steel, and he was soon in their midst, boarded them, and even gave advice which proved of value in an emergency. The long idle days on the Medway at Chatham were about to stand him in good stead. The flotilla was in the charge of Major Abbott of the Bengal Engineers, a busy man with no experience of boats or navigation, and no interest in either; to him, therefore, it was something of a white elephant. A report that a newly-joined subaltern of Engineers was "great at boats," reached his ears. Taylor was sent for, and, after a brief period of probation, to his great delight, was ordered to take his Company to the Sutlej, to assume charge of the bridge equipment, and to teach his men how to manage the boats and form them into bridges—to him, in fact, was temporarily entrusted the actual handling of the flotilla.

The boats were 54[1] in number, 60 feet in length, and 10 in width, each of them carried 5 beams, and 30 planks for the formation of a roadway, and was completely equipped with anchors, cables, baulks, chesses, etc. Each, moreover, was originally manned by 13 lascars; the Government, however—sincere in its desire to maintain peace, and in its belief that it could do so—dismissed these competent boatmen. It fell to Alex Taylor's lot, therefore, not only to convert the 250 Native Sappers of his Company into efficient bridge-builders, but into practical oarsmen and watermen. No inconsiderable task for a lad of nineteen.

On the 8th December (1845) Sir Henry Hardinge was warned by Major Broadfoot that the Sikhs were making

[1] The original number was 60. Six had been swamped and lost between Bombay and Karachi.

active preparations for an immediate invasion of British territory. On the 12th,[1] the Sikh Army, 100,000 strong, including armed camp-followers, crossed the Sutlej. On the 13th, the British Proclamation of War was issued.

On the 9th or 10th a subaltern of Engineers, Lieutenant Goodwyn, brought Alex Taylor orders to sink his big boats, and to fall back on Ferozpur, carrying all his small stores with him. This was done. As soon as it was dark, the flotilla was towed into a secluded part of the backwater in which it lay; a hole, only 2 inches square, was cut in the bottom of each boat, and one and all were left safely embedded in the silt of the river-bed, there to lie securely hidden by weeds and water until their rightful owners should be able to claim their services again.

When Alex Taylor and his Company rejoined at Ferozpur, they found the station in a most precarious position. Its garrison—lying in open unfortified cantonments, slightly protected by entrenchments and light field-works recently thrown up by the orders of Sir John Littler—consisted, as has been seen, of 7000 men in all, of which one regiment only, the 62nd, was British, two troops of Horse Artillery, and two light field batteries of six guns each.[2] Inevitably, thanks to its position, the first objective of the Khalsa Army after it crossed the Sutlej, it was separated from Ludhiana by a distance of eighty miles, along which large bodies of Sikhs under various Sirdars were stationed. Between it and its base, Ambala, lay, not only more Sikh columns, but, as said already, 130 miles of roadless, waterless, sandy desert, dotted with bushes of camel-thorn and low prickly jungle-scrub, across which the natural means of transport is the camel.

Hardinge and Gough, fully aware of its danger, swept

[1] Gough and Innes, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
[2] Gough and Innes, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

to its relief, the one from Ludhiana, the other from Ambala. Their combined forces met, and defeated some 20,000 or 30,000 Sikhs at Mudki, twenty miles from Ferozpur, on 18th December; the Ambala Column having made what, under the conditions, was a "record" march of 130 miles in seven days: enveloped in clouds of dust and impeded by low-growing thorns, the men composing it had marched with little water and insufficient food, beneath a burning sun by day, and had slept at nightfall—tired, hungry, without great-coats, and often in the open—with a thermometer sinking on the ground to freezing-point. Three days later, the Force stoutly re-engaged the enemy at Ferozshah (21st and 22nd December). After this second battle—which lasted two days, and at the end of which our troops, faint with fatigue and hunger, having tasted nothing for thirty-six hours, were within an ace of annihilation, being almost at the end of their ammunition—the Sikhs withdrew, re-crossed the Sutlej; but, as the British forces were unable to follow up the dearly bought victory, returned, and entrenched themselves strongly at Sobraon.

It was all-important to attack the enemy before they could receive reinforcements or march further into our territory—munitions of war, however, were wanting. The great arsenal of Northern India, Delhi, was 200 miles from Sobraon, and the carriage to convey the output of its forges and furnaces to the seat of war was not forthcoming. In this dilemma Sir Henry Hardinge, who had met John Lawrence at Delhi and had been struck by his ability and energy, wrote personally to him. The young Collector responded to his Chief's appeal with the energy which afterwards saved India at a still greater crisis—in an incredibly short space of time he gathered 40,000 carts together and, as soon as the Delhi arsenal had turned out

its quota of weapons and missiles, dispatched the train—carts, camels, and elephants—across the desert to Sobraon. It arrived on 8th February 1846. Two days later the British Army attacked the Sikhs, who were strongly placed within a series of semicircular entrenchments, backed by a big swinging curve of the rushing river, and defended by sixty-seven pieces of heavy artillery and 35,000 Khalsa warriors. After a severe and prolonged struggle the British troops carried the day; the vanquished fighting magnificently and to the death. They are said to have lost 10,000 men; the shallows and backwaters of the river were blocked for miles downstream with the bodies of their slain, while their dead, lying one above the other in the trenches, witnessed to the splendid staunchness with which they had held their positions. This battle was decisive, the Khalsa recognised that it was beaten, and its members laid down their arms. Such were the main lines of the campaign.

Ferozpur, meanwhile—where Alex Taylor was getting his first glimpse of war in December—was isolated at the beginning of the campaign. Large bodies of Sikhs, lying to the South-East, cut off all possibility of communication with Ambala; while Tej Singh, the Commander-in-Chief of the Panjab Army, at the head of a force variously estimated at from 20,000 to 30,000 men, threatened it from the North-East. To the latter Sir John Littler opposed his small force, drawn up in such a position as to cover the cantonments and city. These two armies lay opposite each other—both threatening to attack, but neither closing—until the 20th December, when Sir John, who had been informed of the British victory at Mudki, received orders to effect a junction with the main army at Ferozshah.

At 7 a.m. next morning he executed the following daring manœuvre. Leaving a skeleton encampment—with picquets

out, and sentries and buglers much *en évidence* to face the enemy; and the 27th Native Infantry, together with some Sappers and Miners to defend the town—he slipped the bulk of his force out of the South-Easterly exits from the city, and joined the Commander-in-Chief's army in time to take part in the terrible two-days' struggle at Ferozshah. Meanwhile, like a cat outside an empty mouse-hole, Tej Singh—completely deceived—kept a vigilant watch on the semblance of an army lying between him and Ferozpur. So far well; it was inevitable, however, that the moment of discovery should arrive eventually, and then, woe betide the weak decoy, should the Sirdar check his pursuit of the true quarry for a few hours in order to wreck the deceptive screen. This, however, he did not do. Next morning (22nd December), having learned the truth, and having heard the sound of heavy firing to the South-East, he marched in all haste to support his comrades, then hotly engaging the British troops at Ferozshah. On arriving on the field towards noon, however, and seeing terrible evidences of the slaughter that had taken place, and the British force in possession of the Sikh entrenchments, he withdrew, leaving the British troops—of whose lack of ammunition and complete exhaustion[1] he was ignorant—in possession of the field. The British loss was 2415 killed and wounded, while that of the splendid, but ill-led, Khalsa Army was estimated at 5000 men and 100 guns.

But to return to Taylor's slender thread of adventures. Immediately on his arrival at Ferozpur, he was put in charge of the defence of the interior of the town, which was about a mile and a half in circumference, with his headquarters in the citadel. He describes this citadel, in a letter to his sister, as square in plan, its sides some 100 feet in length, and its

[1] They had been under arms for some thirty hours, *i.e.* since 2 a.m. on the preceding day.

walls about eighty feet high and exceedingly thick; the hollow space thus enclosed being filled with earth. This large squat tower was surrounded by a ditch, and separated from the houses and streets of the town by a clear continuous space about fifty yards in width.

"I was stationed on the flat top of this tower," he writes, "with one six-pounder gun, the Company of Sappers I commanded, and 120 convicts whom I had orders to shoot if they gave trouble. This was the entire force in the city. Outside the walls was one regiment of Native Infantry[1] which had been told not to fall back on the town until it was nearly pommelled to pieces and could do nothing else." Littler's main force lay a mile and a half to the North of the city: *i.e.* between it and the river. "Immediately after I got in, and was properly encamped," Taylor continues, "I got orders to do my best to put the town into a state of defence, for which purpose I was given almost absolute power in the city. Next day they sent me three nine-pounders, under an Addiscombe chum of mine."

It was intended, clearly, that Littler's Column, if driven back by Tej Singh's army, should make a stand outside the city, where it would be supported by the 27th Native Infantry; that, if further pressed, it should fall back in good order, taking advantage of all defendable points in the streets; and, finally, that it should set its back to the wall at the citadel, and there, if necessary, sell its life dearly.

It was with this possible programme in view that Alex Taylor set to work to fortify the streets leading to the citadel, *i.e.* to put up shelters and barricades, to loophole the houses *en route*, etc. To do this he had to

[1] The 27th N.I. It was during these days of peril that Taylor first came into contact with its austere and capable Adjutant, John Nicholson, his senior by four years, with whom he remained on terms of warm friendship—though the two busy men met but seldom—until shortly before the death of *the* hero, *par excellence*, of the Mutiny, twelve years later, at Delhi.

impress the labour of the townsfolk; this was given reluctantly at first, but when it was known that 30,000 Sikhs, with abundant artillery admirably served by gunners trained by French and Italian officers, had taken up a position North of Ferozpur—their immense camp was clearly visible from the top of the citadel—things began to "hum." "All the shopkeepers in the city, and every man fit for work turned out, and worked like devils," writes Taylor. "The men were not allowed to go away for dinner, but were supplied while at work with 'sweetmeats,' as the natives call them—something like baked beans—and, in this way, worked from daylight till dark. You never saw people more thoroughly excited than we were, though we tried to appear as unconcerned as possible."

The garrison at Ferozpur was certainly in a "tight place"; but the nerves of the two lads in temporary charge of the city were in no way shaken by the danger of their position, as the following incident shows. They were sitting one evening, very tired, on the top of Taylor's castle —the "Abode of Power," they had dubbed it—watching the Sikh encampment through their glasses, looking at their pistols, whistling well-known airs, "feeling the edges of various swords," and wondering if they would use them soon, when they "suddenly" found a bottle of port in the young gunner's box. "It must be mulled," they both declared; and mulled it was. Nine o'clock found the two great school-boys—in heart, at any rate—bowed with sleep, beside empty tumblers; after a little parley they both turned in, and were soon sleeping the sleep of tired youth.

An hour later the clatter of horses' hoofs galloping up the roadway, the challenging of sentries, and the loud words, "Sappers and Miners, Sahib kahan hai,"[1] smote Taylor's ears. "Hullo!" he cried, reluctantly, "Who's there?

[1] "Where is the Sahib?"

What's up?" ("It was very cold," he says in his letter, "and I was afraid I might have to get out of bed.") "Good God, Taylor," was the reply, "turn out! Haven't you heard the row? Turn out!" "Wait a bit," said a sleepy young voice, "I must put on my trousers!" "Damn your trousers!" was the unsympathetic rejoinder, "come out as you are!" "I was now thoroughly excited," writes Taylor, "and though it was very cold, my friend and I went out in the dress of sleepers"—observe the euphemism: he was writing to his sister—a dress which doubtless involved the most unpleasant exposure of long white legs to the biting cold of that dark and wintry tower-top, for pyjamas were then unknown. "The Sikhs are advancing," said the indignant messenger, an officer of the 27th. "We have turned out. I ordered Tulloch's guns out on my way up. That's all!" and away he rode into the murky darkness.

Taylor and his chum dressed in haste, the men were got under arms, the walls of the citadel were manned, and its gateway left open to enable the 27th to take shelter within its walls quickly, in case they were overpowered by the enemy. This was at 10 p.m.; at 1 a.m. a bright moon arose, and dispelled the darkness. Not a sound had been heard; and, as it appeared that nothing was about to happen, the Sepoys, who had been under arms for three hours, were allowed to return to their tents, which were pitched within the fort, and the two young officers turned in again and had their sleep out. It was one of many false alarms.

On the 18th December the distant booming of cannon announced the engagement at Mudki. On the 19th General Littler heard the glad news of victory, and of the capture of seventeen Sikh guns at Mudki, and on the 20th performed the manœuvre already described—slipped out of the town

on the South-East, leaving a skeleton army to deceive the enemy.

This skeleton force (the 27th Native Infantry and Taylor, with his Company of Sappers and Miners) did not particularly relish its position—1000 men against 30,000. "We, in the city," writes Taylor, "thought it most extraordinary that we should be left in front of a well-equipped army thirty times our strength! No one has been able to find out why the Sikhs did not come down and eat us up. Nothing, however, happened during the morning. At about 3 in the afternoon a low rumbling noise was heard, broken at intervals by loud explosions. This continued without intermission throughout the afternoon, and went on till 11 at night, after which there was a lull, till 1 a.m., when the Artillery re-commenced firing, and kept it up till 11 next day. During this long suspense all kinds of opinions were hazarded. Everyone knew that our army was the finest India had ever seen, and, also, that it would be all up with us at Ferozpur if it were repulsed. The general opinion was that things looked suspicious, that the Sikhs must be having the best of it, for otherwise the engagement would have been a short one. We all thought, and rightly too, that our native troops had been unable to stand the heavy fire of the Sikh artillery, and that the fight was continued because English pluck disdained to run away from 'natives.'"

The darkness which separated the 21st from the 22nd of December, was filled with incident. Cunningham,[1] the historian of the War, has described its horrors at Ferozshah, horrors of which the echoes reached Ferozpur ten miles distant. "If ever army were thrashed," writes Taylor, "ours was at Ferozshah: men and officers who had lost their road came pouring into Ferozpur all night, regiments had been broken up, colours could not be found, hardly a

[1] Captain J. D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, London, 1848, p. 308.

native regiment held together, regiments fired into one another by mistake, and, had it not been for the large proportion of Europeans in the Force, the army had been lost. The Queen's 3rd Dragoons behaved most splendidly, they went straight at everything. Though their horses could hardly stand for want of food, they rode furiously at the enemy's guns, cut down the men serving them, and, not being able to stop, went through the Infantry into the middle of the entrenchments, and, to return, were forced to charge back again, obliging us to stop firing to let them through. This they did several times."

"Now," he adds, "I will tell you a story of a Horse Artilleryman who came under my own observation, which will give you a tolerable idea of the grit of that branch of the service. During the night of the 21st, the Sikh force in our front broke up, and marched to the assistance of their friends at Ferozshah. Our Artillerymen, having expended all their ammunition, were ordered in to Ferozpur to replenish, and, as there was now no one to disturb us, I went in[1] to hear the news. It appears, that while the artillery wagons were being re-filled, one of the tired men got hold of some drink, 'became lively,' and was ordered by his officer to stay behind, as unfit to go into action. This, however, he refused to do, and two men were ordered to remove him. He then drew his sword, swore he would cut down the first man who touched him, and burst out crying. The other men interceded for him, saying that he would 'be done for ever, and ashamed to show his face anywhere,' if his gun went into action without him. As it was moving out, he was given leave to accompany it. 'Hurrah!' he cried, 'God bless your honour!' and went happily back, to expose himself to a murderous fire, under which he and his comrades had already served

[1] To the cantonments, presumably.

their gun for twenty-four hours, during which none of them had tasted a morsel of food!"

As the withdrawal of Tej Singh's army had freed the left bank of the Sutlej in the neighbourhood of Ferozpur from the presence of the Khalsa soldiery, and as it was hoped that the English should soon be in a position to carry the war into the enemy's country, Taylor received orders to return with his Company to the ford, to raise his boats, to continue the training of his men in the formation of bridges, and to hold them in readiness to fling a path with the utmost celerity across the river when necessary—a path, strong enough to carry heavy artillery. This he did; and great was his pride and pleasure in seeing his fifty-four large boats once more afloat, unstrained and uninjured by their fortnight under water, and to watch his Company daily growing in efficiency.

Three weeks later, Major Abbott appeared on the scene with an exceptionally large staff, and three additional Companies of Sappers and Miners. The work was now carried on on a large scale: the stores necessary to the erection of the bridge were collected, and the thousand unpractised men assembled were exercised in the handling of the awkward bridge-boats, which then lay in a quiet backwater, but which would have to be manœuvred into position eventually in the rushing waters of the Sutlej proper. The task to be entrusted to the Engineers was the conveyance of some 100,000 men, guns, carts, and animals from the left to the right bank of difficult waters, probably under fire. The means at their disposal were the fifty-four bridge-boats from Bombay, sufficient pontoons to make fourteen rafts, and a few local river-boats (chuppos).

The first thing to be done was to select the site of the bridge; and the second, to occupy both its ends militarily, so as to protect it while under construction. The site chosen

was within a few yards of the mouth of the creek in which the boats were stationed, at which point the river was only 600 feet wide—whereas its general width varied from 1000 to 2000 feet—was bounded by steep banks some six feet high, and, owing to its confined basin, was of sufficient depth to float the boats throughout the whole length of the bridge.

"It was originally designed"—writes Lieutenant Henry Yule, one of the Engineer officers present—"that the whole flotilla should be used in the first instance as ferry-boats to row over a body of five or six thousand men to occupy the opposite bank, and 'cover' the construction of the bridge. . . . Our Sappers had learned to guide and move—with considerable exertion—these unwieldy vessels in the still-water creek to which our practice was necessarily confined, whilst the further bank of the main river was occupied by the enemy; but we could not but have serious misgivings as to the result of launching the fleet, freighted with troops and manned by our inexperienced crews, among the shoals and eddies with which the Sutlej abounds."[1] For these excellent reasons the use of the bridge-boats as ferry-boats was abandoned, and the transport of the defensive troops confined to pontoon rafts and large local "chuppos."

At dawn on the 10th of February the low growling of distant guns told the men assembled among the piles of fascines and mounds of loose earth near the ford that the long-looked-for battle of Sobraon was in progress.

At 2 p.m. Sir Henry Hardinge's Military Secretary rode into the Engineers' camp with news of a decisive victory and the immediate approach of our troops.

At 8.30 p.m. Sir John Grey, with Artillery, arrived at the head of three regiments.

[1] See *Prof. Papers of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, vol. x.: "The Bridges at Khoonda Ghat and Nuggar," by Lieutenant Henry Yule, Bengal Engineers (afterwards Colonel Sir Henry Yule, K.C.S.I.).

Long ere this, the natural bar which separated the back-water from the main stream was cut, and the pontoon-rafts and chuppos so disposed as to facilitate the embarkation of the troops destined to protect the bridge. Immediately on their arrival, these were ferried over to the right bank, thirty men on each raft, and a Company, or a gun-limber and seven horses, or one elephant, on each chuppo. The moon was full, but delays were caused by the occasional grounding of pontoons on sand-banks and by the viciousness of the artillery horses. A more serious drawback was the difficulty of getting the large bridge-boats through the cutting in the bar, owing to which it was only possible to begin bridging-operations at 10 a.m. on the 11th.[2] The Sappers, however, worked splendidly, with little intermission and without reliefs; with the result that at 9.30 a.m. on the 12th all the boats were in position, and the roadway—made of fascines[1] of tamarisk overlaid with stamped earth—complete.

The troops passed over immediately, and the Commander-in-Chief and his staff early in the afternoon. "During the intervals between the passage of the troops," writes Yule,[2] "the pressure of camels, carts, ponies, doolies, camp-followers, and even elephants towards the head of the bridge was beyond all conception of those who have not seen the impedimenta of an Indian army. Nothing but the whip of a stalwart Provost Marshal, and the volunteer assistance afforded him from the highest to the lowest rank in the army, availed to keep our bridge from utter annihilation. This pressure continued with scarcely any visible diminution for four days. . . . No serious hurt to man or beast occurred during the passage of the army. If an

[1] Small carefully-bound bundles of young wood.

[2] The passage of elephants by the bridge was absolutely prohibited. They were ferried across in chuppos.

awkward camel did get its leg over the side, and lie in helpless imbecility, without making an effort to extricate itself, as is the manner of camels in difficulties, the load was at once canted into the nearest boat, and the animal pitched overboard. Not one, however, lost its life."[1]

Thus the British Army and its camp-followers—some 100,000 men, 68,000 animals, and 40 pieces of heavy artillery—crossed the river *en route* for Lahore.

Alex Taylor, meanwhile, had been *hors de combat.* He and John Nicholson at Ferozpur had been all eagerness to face death in the tumultuous excitement of the battle-field. He had, instead, to endure one of the unkindest experiences which can befall a young officer on service : namely, temporary disablement by severe illness, endured without any of the blessed mitigations of the squalor of physical distress which have been contrived by civilisation ; and this, at a critical moment of a campaign. Some two or three weeks after he had returned to his flotilla he was attacked by smallpox, an illness he naïvely attributed to "over-exposure to the sun," but which was probably caught from contact with infected garments. Indeed, on reading his account of the entire absence, in his own case, of any precaution against the spread of infection, one wonders, not that one young officer was struck down by this terrible disease, but that the army was not decimated by it.

It would appear that when first stricken he was living, in tents, some three miles from the ford near which the flotilla was anchored, in the midst of his Company ; and it is likely that he had then the companionship of a younger fellow-subaltern. He most certainly enjoyed the care of a much-esteemed sergeant, Sergeant Bates. When his illness was at its height, and he was seldom conscious, his Company suddenly received orders to join the main

[1] Yule, *op. cit.*

force at Sobraon, in anticipation of the coming encounter; in obedience to which summons everyone marched away, leaving the sick officer—still a mere growing lad—to the tender mercies of his native servants. "I was left with my servants on the bank of the Sutlej," he writes, very simply, "without any medical attendance, whatever, even of the humblest character. I was so weak at the time, however," he adds, "that it was a day or two before I knew that my Company had gone, and that I had been left alone."

His illness took its course.

On 11th February—the day subsequent to the battle of Sobraon—the convalescent was sitting feebly in the doorway of his tent, in the early morning sunshine, when his subaltern, George Sim[1]—aged about 19—arrived direct from the battle-field, and very tired, having ridden in. The sight of a bed in the background was too much for him, and without more ado he flung himself on it. Taylor remonstrated, and explained the danger; in vain. To the new arrival's "I don't care, I must sleep," there was no answer but forcible ejection; and this was one the unwilling host was too weak to make. George Sim had his sleep out, awoke eventually, much refreshed, and was never a whit the worse for his dangerous siesta.

In the late afternoon, unable to endure further inactivity, Taylor rode down with him to the bridge—three miles distant—to see how things were going. The river was in flood, and the bodies of Khalsa soldiers who had lost their lives on the previous day at Sobraon—some thirty miles upstream—came thumping against the boats, and blocked the water-way between them. Presently one of the men of his Company was knocked into the stream, and the invalid, forgetting his feebleness, immediately flung himself into the icy water with the intent to rescue; he was too

[1] The late Colonel George Sim.

weak, however, to swim at all, and had to be picked out himself, while a boatman rescued the soldier. As night was falling, and as the barely-convalescent was wet through, he and George Sim decided that it was time for them to leave the wind-swept river, and make for home. They lost their way, however, in the darkness; but eventually, after long flounderings in a morass, reached their journey's end, Taylor, as may be imagined, "very cold and miserable."

To his surprise on nearing camp he observed lights and sounds of gaiety streaming from his tent; and, on arrival, found four or five hungry young brother-officers—who had just ridden in from Sobraon—seated at his table, and, about to partake of what he happened to know was the only piece of meat in his larder. They had arrived famished, had called for food, and his table-attendant had provided it. "There was nothing for me to do," he wrote, "but to strike in at once; so, having changed my clothes, I had a mutton-chop and a bottle of beer, and went to bed. I awoke next morning none the worse for the day's adventures." Such is youth.

Apparently no attempt at disinfection was made; everything washable passed naturally into the hands of the dhobi (washerman); furniture, tents, suits, great-coats, etc., merely continued in use. If mothers could see how the sons live whom they send to the outposts of our Empire, their patriotism would be strained to near breaking-point.

Some ten days later saw Taylor at Lahore, where he was given command of a detachment of two Companies, and whence he wrote to his sister in April: "Wish me joy! I have got my medal—or rather earned it, for I have not seen it yet—as also have the Company I commanded through the late row. The order is that all troops left behind to guard Ferozpur when the Force marched out to join the Governor-General on the 21st, shall be

decorated; and, as I commanded the city-fort, I come in for a medal for the battle of Ferozshah; so you see, after all, merit gets its reward—and so it should!" he very properly adds. It would indeed have been monstrous if the danger to which the Screening-Force at Ferozpur had been mercilessly exposed had not been officially recognised.

Thus ended his first campaign.

The Sikh Army—wantonly invading British territory without provocation—had challenged the British Army to a trial of strength. The result had been conclusive: it had been soundly thrashed by a force about one-third its strength. The E. I. Company would have been within its rights had it annexed the Panjab. It did not do so, for the following reasons. The European Army was only 3000 strong on the Sikh frontier, while the Khalsa still numbered 14,000 experienced soldiers, and—even after the peace of Lahore—retained some forty pieces of heavy artillery. The country was poor, and of vast extent; its inhabitants were warlike, and deeply attached to their independence; and its Government, civil and military, was in a state of anarchy. Its great plains were more valuable as a buffer between British territory and Afghanistan than as real property.

The Company, therefore, determining to continue its former pacific policy, gave the Sikhs another opportunity of forming an independent local government. They had shown, however, that they were not quite dependable neighbours. A British representative, Sir Henry Lawrence, was placed, therefore, as Resident at the head of the "Lahore Durbar,"[1] in order to steady its councils, and to safeguard British interests; a Movable Column destined to enforce the

[1] The Rani Jhindan was at first recognised as Regent for her infant son, Dhulip Singh, but her intrigues proved so dangerous that it was eventually found necessary to remove her to Benares.

authority of the Durbar was stationed at Lahore; an indemnity, destined to cover the expenses of the war, was demanded; Jullundur, and all the Sikh possessions South of the Sutlej were confiscated, as also all the pieces of heavy artillery which had been turned against us—250 in all; the number of the Sikh Army was reduced to 23,000 men of all arms; and, finally—at the request of the Lahore Durbar—detachments of British troops were left in the Panjab in order to enable the central Sikh Government to enforce its authority.

At the same time the British Government set itself seriously to the task of strengthening its own frontier force. It had been taken by surprise by the late Sikh invasion; it now determined that, should a second outbreak occur—and the character of the Khalsa rendered this almost inevitable—the British army should be found ready to meet the whole Sikh nation in arms, and to put the question of supremacy to the test of a final trial. Its action, however, was hampered by the Directors of the E. I. Company, who, influenced by motives of economy, gave it insufficient support.

It really seemed at the moment, however, as if Sir Henry Lawrence's attempt to make the Panjab a self-governing unit, and a law-abiding neighbour, might be crowned by success. He was a strong man, who obtained an ascendancy not only over the heads, but over the hearts of those with whom he came into contact, whatever their race; his courtesy, his powers of sympathy and imagination, his integrity, iron will, and fearlessness in action gave him an unbounded influence over the Native Chiefs with whom he had to deal; and he was backed by a remarkable group of subordinates, men whom he had been allowed to select himself, and to whom he gave large responsibilities and a free hand.

CHAPTER III

THE SECOND SIKH WAR

1848–1849

TOWARDS the end of 1847, Taylor, who had been stationed at Ludhiana, the headquarters of the Sappers and Miners, was promoted to be Executive-Engineer, and sent back to Ferozpur, the flotilla and the bridge-equipment passing again into his care.

In April (1848) the Station was electrified by the news of the murder of two well-known, able, and popular young officers—Mr Vans Agnew of the Civil Service, and Lieutenant Anderson of the 1st Bombay Fusiliers—at Multan, whither they had been sent with a large escort[1] by the Lahore Government, to support an incoming Sikh Governor, Sirdar Khan Singh, and this at the request of the retiring Governor, Mulraj.

The facts were, briefly, as follows. On the morning of 19th April, Mulraj, Khan Singh, and the two unarmed Politicals were riding out of the fort, when one of Mulraj's soldiers suddenly unhorsed Mr Vans Agnew by striking him violently on the side with a spear. Vans Agnew leapt to his feet, and struck his treacherous assailant across the face with a riding whip. A general mêlée ensued, in which both the Englishmen were severely wounded, rescued with difficulty by Khan Singh and their escort, and carried to the strong Muhammadan building,

[1] "1400 Sikhs, one Gurkha regiment, some 700 Cavalry, and 6 guns."—Gough and Innes, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

the Idgah—a cannon's shot from the city walls—in which they were lodged. Mulraj, who was present, rode away without offering any assistance. This was at 11 a.m.

Wounded as he was, Mr Vans Agnew wrote immediately to Mulraj, to the Resident at Lahore, and addressed a letter to either Van Cortlandt or Herbert Edwardes, in the Derajat, asking for immediate assistance.

Next day the escort proved faithless.

"Horse, Foot, Artillery, all had departed by the evening, except Sirdar Khan Singh, some eight or ten faithful horsemen, the domestic servants of the British officers, and the munshis of their office. Beneath the lofty central dome of that empty hall, so strong and formidable that a very few stout hearts could have defended it, a small group of faithful men stood round the beds of the two Englishmen. . . . The sun went down . . . twilight was closing in . . . an indistinct and distant murmur reached the ears of the few remaining inmates of the Idgah. . . . Louder and louder it grew, until it became a cry—the cry of a multitude for blood. On they came, from city, suburbs, fort; soldiers with their arms; citizens, young and old, and of all trades and callings, with any weapons they could snatch. A Company of Mulraj's Mazbis—outcasts, turned Sikh—led the mob. It was an appalling sight, and Sirdar Khan Singh begged of Vans Agnew to be allowed to wave a sheet and sue for mercy. Though weak in body from loss of blood, Vans Agnew's heart failed him not. He replied: 'The time for mercy is gone; let none be asked for. They can kill us two if they like; but we are not the last of the English. Thousands of Englishmen will come down here when we are gone, and will annihilate Mulraj, and his soldiers, and his fort.'[1]

[1] History repeats itself, and so do the acts and words of brave men. When Sir Louis Cavagnari, after having negotiated and signed the treaty

The crowd now rushed in with horrible shouts, made Khan Singh prisoner, and, pushing aside the servants with the butts of their muskets, surrounded the two wounded officers. Lieutenant Anderson from the first had been too much hurt even to move, and now Vans Agnew was sitting by his bed-side, holding his hand, and talking in English. . . . Goodhur Singh, a Mazbi so deformed and crippled with wounds that he looked more like an imp than mortal man, stepped forth from the crowd with drawn sword, and, after insulting Vans Agnew with a few last indignities, struck him twice upon the neck, and, with a third blow, cut off his head. Some other ruffian discharged a musket into the lifeless body. Anderson was then hacked to death with swords; and afterwards the two bodies were dragged outside, insulted by the crowd, and left all night under the sky.

Next day Mulraj held a Durbar at which he taunted Sirdar Khan Singh, late his rival, now his prisoner. Goodhur Singh, the murderer, approached, and presented a head, noble still in death. . . . This was thrown into the lap of Sirdar Khan Singh, who was told to 'take the head of the youth he had brought down to govern at Multan.' . . . Indignities followed which it can serve no good purpose to repeat."[1]

All things come to an end. Eventually Mulraj ordered

of Gandamak, in May 1879, took up his residence, according to agreement, in Kabul, in June, he was warned by the Amir, Yakub Khan, that his life was in danger. "If I am killed," he replied, "there are many men in India ready to take my post."

The proud words and unalterable resolution of our Envoys bore the fruit they anticipated; the lives they laid down sealed the success of the policy they represented. The death of the two Politicals at Multan resulted in the annexation of the Panjab. The massacre of Sir Louis Cavagnari and his escort resulted in the diplomatic predominance of Britain in Afghanistan.

[1] From an account written by Herbert Edwardes, who had it from eye-witnesses. Lady Edwardes, *Life of Major-General Sir Herbert Edwardes, K.C.B., K.C.S.I.*, 2 vols., Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1886, i. pp. 95 ff.

that the bodies of the two Englishmen should be buried. But twice the people of Multan tore them from their graves, in order to rob them of the shawls in which they had been wrapped.

Sir Henry Lawrence was in England on sick leave at the time, and the absence of his determined leadership made itself felt disastrously. The British Resident and the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gough—instead of launching the Movable Column at Lahore against Multan immediately, as Sir Henry had done on a far less sinister occasion—urged the *Sikh Durbar* to strike. As the outbreak was the outcome of a domestic difference between the Sikh Government and one of its vassals, it was the business of the Lahore Durbar to deal with it—so they argued, and the argument would have been an excellent one had they been chopping logic in a debating society; its result was the dispatch of four Columns of disaffected *Sikhs*, led, not by men like Sir Henry Lawrence, but by Sirdars of doubtful loyalty—amongst whom Sher Singh was pre-eminent—against a *Sikh* Chief, with whose cause the rank and file of the Force were in ardent sympathy. It will be seen that one of these doubtful allies, Sher Singh, eventually threw in his lot with our enemies, and turned the scales against us at a critical moment. These Sikh Columns, moreover, did not reach Multan till some *eleven* weeks after the murder of the two Englishmen, at which date the rebellion at Multan was beginning to take on the character of a religious and national war.

The dilatory Panjab policy was discussed with disapproval in the regimental messes of Ferozpur; but great was the enthusiasm roused by the energetic action taken by Lieutenant Herbert Edwardes, the Political in charge of the Derajat. No sooner did this young officer—a disciple and friend of Sir Henry Lawrence—receive Vans Agnew's letter asking for help, than, without asking for orders from

Lahore, he swept across the Indus at the head of wild Pathan (Muhammadan) levies, and, with the aid of Colonel Van Cortlandt and of the Nawab of Bahawalpur, succeeded in driving Mulraj into Multan, which he thought he might succeed in capturing if speedily reinforced by "Napier[1] and some guns"; for both of which he begged in vain.

Forced into action by the energy of their subordinate, and by the danger of his position, the British authorities at last dispatched a body of men under General Whish to co-operate with him and the Sirdars in attacking Multan. This force arrived at Multan after the middle of August.

The strong fortress of Multan could only be taken by breaching its walls; to do this, large guns and heavy ammunition were needed; carriage, however, was exceedingly difficult to obtain, while the boats and boatmen of the Ravi and the Sutlej were quite unfit to be entrusted with so precious a convoy. Major Robert Napier—the Chief Engineer of the Force—then bethought him of the pontoon boats, which, though unwieldy and not designed to carry freight through difficult waters, might be used for this purpose, he thought, if put into suitable hands.

He sent for Alex Taylor, and asked him if he would undertake to carry the heavy artillery and engineering stores more than two hundred miles down the Sutlej in his bridge-boats. The young Engineer replied in a delighted affirmative; but begged that Sergeant Bates, who had been his right hand in 1845–46, should be given him as an assistant. This was done.

On the 30th July the heavily laden flotilla started for its long row from Ferozpur to Adamwahan, forty miles from Multan. The Chief Engineer travelled with it, sharing Alex Taylor's living boat. Neither Taylor nor his boatmen

[1] Afterwards Field Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala, G.C.B., R.E. (late Bengal).

knew the river; the boats were cumbersome and many the difficulties which suddenly sprang into existence during that long hot journey. Rapids, shallows, rocks, sand-banks, narrow channels, eddies, storms, and floods,[1] contributed their quota to the alarms and hair-breadth escapes which gave Major Napier so many opportunities of observing the steadiness, energy, and resource of his young subaltern, between whom and himself, a fatherly regard on the one side, and a very reverent admiration on the other, gradually grew into a friendship which time only served to ripen, and to which Taylor owed more than one of the opportunities of his life.

The flotilla reached its destination—Adamwahan, opposite Bahawalpur—in little more than a fortnight, arriving on 15th August; its contents were disembarked by the Sappers and Miners, who had marched thither from Ludhiana at forty-eight hours' notice. Steep and firm banks were found, beside which the water was sufficiently deep to allow the boats to come alongside; and the precious cargo, of which nothing had been lost *en route*, was gradually unladen and heaped in gigantic piles on what seemed to be *terra firma*. Taylor's Chief was warm in congratulations. Taylor himself lit his cheroot, and enjoyed success. "My part of the undertaking," he writes, "was now happily completed, and I looked with much satisfaction at the stacks of heavy artillery and engineering stores already made over to the proper authorities, which Sergeant Bates of the Sappers and

[1] "The Sutlej was then in full flood, like a sea in some places, you could scarcely see across it. . . . Many incidents of that river journey occur to me:—the wild dreary flats of mud-bank, over which the tawny flood of the river was lapping its turbulent waves; jagged alligators lying on the sand beneath the bluffs of the banks impending on the channel; the dense grassy reaches, down which a tiger would often stroll; the occasional grounding of a train-boat; the excitement of coming to anchor for a night—all these things pass through my memory like a pageant."—Note by Major-General Newall, R.A., one of Alex Taylor's passengers on this occasion. Written in 1887.

I had conveyed two hundred miles down the Sutlej, without any European help whatever; entirely by native boatmen. Major Napier was much pleased."

But, alas, these travellers were rejoicing without taking their host, the river, into account. The current of the Sutlej is swift and strong in the hot weather, and its earthen banks unstable, and given to "slip" under the onslaughts of the rising waters; if a landslip, upstream, changes the momentum of the current, the deflected waters will throw themselves lower down *against* a bank, *past* which they had previously glided, and, working and scraping, will undermine its base, and presently another landslip will in its turn produce others. Taylor was at lunch when he heard that the river had begun just such an attack on the base of the bank on which the ammunition he had brought from so far was stacked; a bank which it was clear would soon succumb. All hands in camp were immediately set to work, and they had only just succeeded in moving all the stores further inland, when the whole area on which the ammunition had been heaped—giving away with a run—collapsed into the rushing stream. "All's well that ends well," writes Taylor, "but had the river postponed its attack until darkness had set in, our ammunition must have been engulfed."

Without siege materials it would have been impossible to inaugurate a siege.

In due time the stores in question were packed into the vehicles which had been collected for the purpose, and presently long strings of country-carts, guarded by escorts of Sappers and Miners, began to wend their way towards Multan.

Major Napier and Alex Taylor marched with the first detachment. The former had expected to be met on landing by armed and mounted guides; in this he was disappointed. He lost no time in waiting for them, however, but put the

convoy into motion as soon as was possible, his scouts keeping a sharp look-out not only for bands of marauding Sikhs, but for a troop of guides. The day passed, however; then a second; but not a sign of either the rebel city or of welcoming allies. At dawn on the third day—the Force moved by night, on account of the heat[1]—the anxious travellers suddenly perceived the fortress, lying still and pale as a cloud upon the warm horizon. A halt was called. The position was an anxious one. It was obviously unwise to advance—the isolated and precious convoy with its small escort was already far too near the citadel for safety; no one had an idea where the camp lay; and the expected guides were not forthcoming. Major Napier called on a volunteer to make a reconnaissance for the site of the camp. Alex Taylor came forward, immediately; was accepted; and rode out into the desert, alone.

The landscape was eerie—a wide sandy, stony plain, frequently intersected by irrigation-cuts (canals) some six feet deep and six feet wide, and studded, at intervals, by conical mounds,[2] varying from a few feet to twenty, or more, in height, which cast long pale clear-cut purple shadows and

[1] "We commenced our march to Multan on the 29th of August, and a severe thing it was! The heat was fearful, the thermometer rising sometimes to as much as 110, or even 115 degrees in the tents. The only remedy was to march at night, although it was pitch dark, it being the dark quarter of the moon."—Major-General D. J. F. Newall, R.A., *The Highlands of India*, 2 vols., Harrison & Sons, London, 1887, ii. p. 438.

[2] These mounds are the remains of mud-houses or villages, which have been melted by heavy rains into shapeless hillocks, sun-baked, and then utilised as the pedestals of fresh houses; these in their turn have succumbed to a similar fate, have been utilised in the same way, and have been finally abandoned. The clay out of which these relays of houses were built was generally dug from about the base of the growing mound, a practice which tended to encircle these hillocks with a depression, containing water after the bouts of rain so rare in that neighbourhood. The considerable eminence on which Multan itself stands has the same origin: its height and size witness to the remote antiquity of its site.

were covered with bushes of prickly caper. Ghost-like and remote over this pallid, oddly furnished desert hung the historic citadel which Ranjit Singh had wrung from the Multani Pathans after so fierce a struggle, and which now harboured Mulraj—son of the great Sikh's famous Vice-Regent, Sawan Mal, the canal-maker—and the murderers of Vans Agnew and Anderson.

In what direction was Taylor to ride? The convoy was moving Northward; General Whish had come from Lahore on the North-East; therefore his camp might well lie to the North-East. On the other hand, it was not unlikely that the troops might have been so placed as to cover the country from which they drew their supplies; and where that lay, he had no idea. He therefore followed his one clue, and rode to the North-East. His horse was fast and a good jumper, it had done him excellent service in the Panjab, and would take a wall or hedge without hesitation, but, so he learned to-day, it abominated a ditch—a rare thing in the Panjab—and, indeed, the deep Multan irrigation-cuts, lying between banks of heaped-up crumbling earth, were unpleasant things to jump. Though delayed by troublesome refusals and struggles at each of the many drains that had to be negotiated during that morning's ride, he had pressed on for some three or four miles, when, from the top of one of the tallest of the cone-shaped thorny mounds—from which alone a view over the country might be obtained—he saw the anxiously-looked-for camp, bright in the morning light; and saw, also, that an open way lay between it and the convoy.

Losing no time, he dropped back on to the plain, intending to rejoin Major Napier and make his report. To his dismay, however, on rounding the Western end of the mound to the summit of which he had ridden, he saw a small body of Native Cavalry—moving in the same direction

as himself—ride into the shelter of its Northern flank. He looked at them sharply; there were about thirty of them, armed to the teeth, and certainly not our men. He had a start of some forty yards, and there was nothing for it but to push on as fast as he could, trusting to his luck and his horse. The thought of the many "cuts" was disagreeable, —what if his mount refused? "I pressed him," he writes, "so as to fully maintain my lead of the half-dozen wild horsemen who, with loose leg, were immediately in eager pursuit. All went well: I saw no irrigation-cuts—or rather, I suppose, in the rush of hoofs and excitement it never occurred to my horse to hesitate over them, for they must have been there—and kept my direction so well, that I suddenly plunged into the head of our escort, shouting loudly 'Look out! they are behind me!' to warn them of the approaching enemy. Having escaped from the danger-zone, I pulled up, and wheeled my horse round sharply to watch the fight. My surprise was great to see that my pursuers had pulled up also; and still greater when I saw John Cracroft, quarter-master of the Sappers, ride out of their midst."

This was the looked-for escort sent to guide the convoy into camp; it consisted of some of Herbert Edwardes' Derajat levies—men whom their Commander describes as "bold villains, always ready to risk their own throats, or to cut those of anyone else," and who, as they went into action the day after they enlisted, were neither disciplined nor wore uniforms. This wild chase, in which both pursuer and pursued were British officers, was a perennial source of amusement to Alex Taylor and to his lifelong friend, John Cracroft, afterwards Commissioner of Delhi.

A few hours more saw the convoy safe in camp, the ammunition in the hands of Artillerymen, and Taylor in charge of the Engineer Park—an appointment, made by

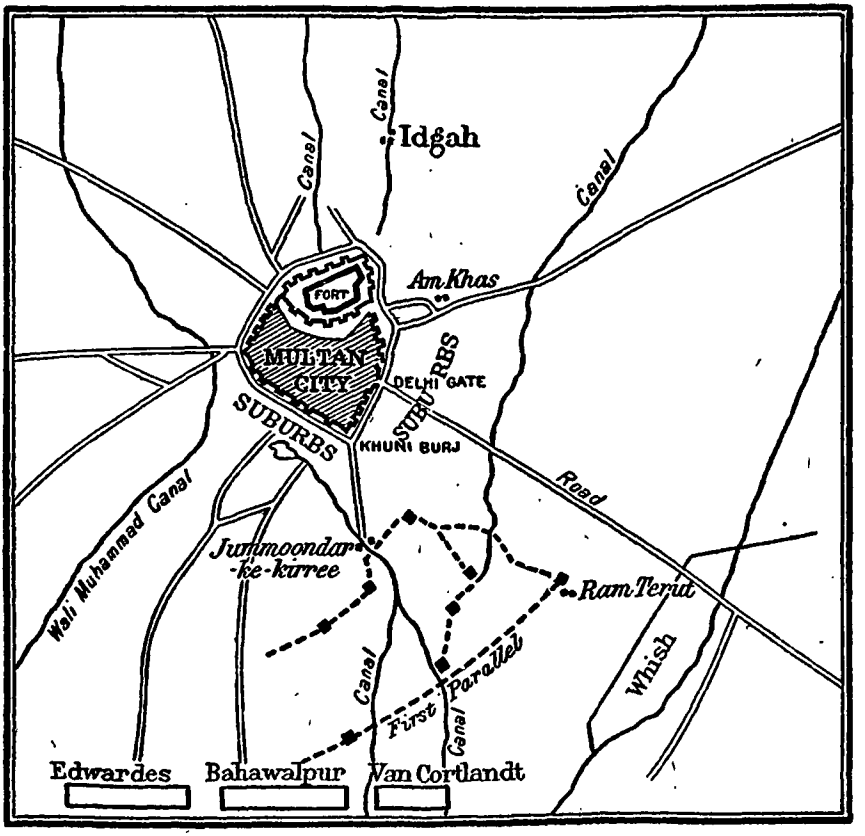
Major Napier, which he held throughout both sieges of Multan. Day by day siege-material arrived; so great was its bulk, however, that it was not until the 4th September that the Engineer and Artillery Parks received their full equipment.

Immediately after the arrival of the complete Siege Train, General Whish issued a Proclamation inviting the inhabitants and garrison to surrender unconditionally within twenty-four hours of the firing, at sunrise on the 5th, of a Royal salute in honour of her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, and her ally, his Highness the Maharaja Dhulip Singh.

"On the morning of the 5th, accordingly," writes Taylor "the Force turned out, and the Artillery fired a royal salute from 24-pounders. Before the sixth round, we received Mulraj's reply—a 14-pound ball, said to contain Whish's Proclamation! The direction was good, but it fell short and hurt no one. Mulraj had spoken; and preparations for the siege were at once commenced."

On the 6th September a Council of War was held, during which the general plan of the future siege-operations was fixed. Three projects were suggested. Major Napier, —who had devoted two months of the most constant and searching inquiries into the nature and extent of the fortifications of Multan, had prepared plans from the most accurate information attainable before he left Lahore, and had now studied the ground itself carefully and at considerable personal risk—made two proposals. The first was that the town should be taken by *coup de main* in one day—the whole army getting within battering distance of the Bloody Bastion (the Khuni Burj), the great bastion on the South-Eastern extremity of the converging walls of the heart-shaped city, and storming the breach as soon as it was practicable—a plan, the execution of which, he admitted, would involve

great loss of life, and might prove a failure; he advocated it for political reasons only, *i.e.* because immediate action was necessary to check the spread of the revolt. This suggestion was rejected by most of the senior military officers present as too hazardous to be practicable. His



second proposal was to attack the fortress scientifically, from the North, by regular approaches. This was objected to on the ground that the abandonment of the then camp, which it involved, would be looked on by the Sikhs as a confession of weakness. A third suggestion was then made. It was proposed that a trench should be run from the North-Easterly

angle of Herbert Edwardes' camp to a point called Ram Terut, a mile further to the North-East, and that this trench should be used as a base from which to advance on the city.

This plan—which was that eventually adopted—is only intelligible if the character of the field of action, the suburban environments of Multan, be clearly grasped.[1]

The town of Multan lies in the midst of a desert, like an "emerald isle," floating upon a sea of dust. Its climate in summer is exceedingly hot, how hot is suggested by the local epigram, which has reference to climate only: "Having Multan, why did God make hell?" Though rain rarely falls, the city and its environments, which are exceedingly wealthy, are richly provided with artificial canals of running water. Wealth, heat, and abundant irrigation naturally result in incomparable gardens: the city and the large houses in its suburbs are embowered in groves of graceful date trees; the hot air is heavy with the scent of rose, tuberose, and jessamine; the gardens are rich in oranges, peaches, and pomegranates, and produce mangoes which are among the most delicious in India. Between these walled gardens—enclosing country houses—lie dirty villages, temples, tombs, mosques, brick-kilns, ravines, and fragments of mere jungle: ground, easy to defend and most difficult to clear.

The suggested trench was a "first parallel"; it was destined to afford cover from which the troops might advance over the difficult ground lying between it and the town, gradually driving the enemy from the gardens and clumps of houses lying between it and some position—still to be discovered—from which the town-wall could be distinctly seen and breached.[2]

[1] See Map, p. 72.

[2] Siddons' "Siege of Multan," *Corps Papers of the Royal Engineers*, intermediate vol., 1850.

The first step in the realisation of this plan was made next day (7th September). At dawn, working parties, numbering in all 2800 men, left their camps, and set themselves to trench-work. The composition of General Whish's army now gave rise to complications. It contained 20,000 men of all arms; 13,000 of these were Irregulars—largely Herbert Edwardes' Pathans—men who would dig trenches for themselves, fight anywhere and against any odds, but would not put a spade into the ground for the defence of others; against this their pride rebelled, it was contrary to "custom." The burden of the digging, therefore, was thrown on to the Native Regulars and the British regiments. It was found, however, that the latter could not face the sun, it simply struck them down. These difficulties were met by two expedients: the British troops were permitted to work by night, and the Pathans were allowed to carry out a separate set of parallels of their own; "this separate attack was conducted by Lieutenant Lake, assisted by Lieutenants Charles Pollard [1] and Frederick Maunsell,[2] two young Engineers whose cool bravery and indefatigable zeal won the admiration of us all," writes Herbert Edwardes; who adds, "The same remark would, however, apply to the whole Engineer staff at Multan—a finer body of men was never collected in any Indian Army."[3]

The rebels set to work at the same time to entrench themselves in the vicinity of the city. "So," writes Herbert Edwardes, "there were two armies throwing up works within a few hundred yards of each other: the rebels with little science, but unbounded zeal, rearing stockades, piling up felled trees and the wood-work of wells and houses, for

[1] The late General Charles Pollard, R.E. (late Bengal).

[2] General Sir Frederick Maunsell, R.E., K.C.B. (late Bengal).

[3] *A Year on the Panjab Frontier*, by Major Herbert B. Edwardes, C.B., 2 vols., Richard Bentley, London, 1851, 2nd edition, ii. p. 513.

the defensive warfare in which the soldiers of the Panjab excel; the British approaching with laborious discipline to the attack which, at the proper moment, would burst from the trenches like a flood, and sweep all obstacles away."

Presently the process of dislodging the enemy from the aforesaid defences, houses, gardens, etc., began. The house-to-house and hand-to-hand fighting that ensued was of a most desperate and determined character. We read of the cool courage with which the officers of the Engineers placed scaling-ladders and laid explosion-bags under the very noses of the enemy's muskets; of the mad rush of soldiery surging over garden walls, or leaping from those walls on to trees, from the boughs of which they dropped into the midst of the enemy; of confused night-attacks on unknown ground; of hundreds of Mulraj's soldiers lying heaped beneath the mango trees in walled enclosures; and of our own many heroic dead. Ever to the fore in the ranks of these brave assailants was Robert Napier, chivalrous, cool, and fertile in resource.

Sometimes driven back, often brought to a temporary standstill, the invading tide of British soldiers nevertheless pressed steadily on, slowly taking point after point of vantage, until, on the 13th of September, the Engineers stood on the destined breaching ground — the summit of a cone in one of the suburbs, which rose within 600 yards of the Bloody Bastion, and from which the masonry of that tower could be seen for at least two-thirds of its height. Without loss of time, and protected by seven batteries already erected in its rear, the Sappers and Miners set to work on the great Breaching Battery.

All was going well. Brave hearts beat high. The day of the assault seemed to be within measurable distance, when, on the morning of 14th September came the sickening news that Sher Singh—the chief of our allies, the Lahore Sirdars—

had gone over to the enemy during the previous night, taking his Column of 4300 Sikhs with him. Sher Singh! whom the British army was ostensibly assisting to chastise a city which had rebelled, not against British rule, but against that of the Lahore Durbar!

The transference of so great a weight from one arm of the scales to the other so altered the relative strength of the two armies, that General Whish was obliged to suspend operations. The projected attack was abandoned for the time being; our hardly-won positions within breaching distance of the walls; the streets, houses, and fortified posts, just taken; our own batteries, and trenches—all were deserted; and the British army fell back in the direction of Bahawalpur, whence it drew its supplies, there to await reinforcements which were immediately ordered from Bombay.

There is no doubt that this step was necessary. Major Napier—who was among the wounded—gave it as his professional opinion that the force at General Whish's disposal after the desertion of Sher Singh was insufficient for the successful execution of his plans, and in this opinion he was supported by the most experienced officers in the camp.

The first act in this retrograde movement was the withdrawal of guns, ammunition, etc., from the great Breaching Battery and its neighbourhood. This was done at nightfall on the 14th, under the cover of the falling darkness, and without molestation from the enemy. The Artillerymen concerned had received their orders in the morning, but by some oversight no similar orders had been issued to the Engineers, who had a large depôt of instruments and tools in its neighbourhood. Taylor had been absent from camp all day on duty. On his return at nightfall he learned that whereas the Battery had been abandoned and its ammunition and stores withdrawn, *his* advanced depôt, with its precious contents, had been left to fall into the

hands of the enemy. The loss of the tools it contained would seriously affect his Park equipment, and it was impossible that he should submit to it without a struggle. His implements had not been collected at Ferozpur, safely carried through the dangers of the long water-journey, snatched in the nick of time from the ravening stream, and painfully piloted across the Multan desert, to be lost when the siege was eight days old. He resolved to recover them if possible.

If the Sikhs had taken possession of the abandoned Battery it would be difficult to regain his stores—this Taylor acknowledged—but if the darkness had effectually concealed the British withdrawal, and the Battery were still unoccupied, there was room for hope.

He resolved to make an attempt; so, taking a sufficient number of camels and workmen and a few of the Park Guard, he sallied out into the darkness, and made his way toward the city. On arrival at a reasonable distance from the great Breaching Battery, he halted his escort and rode on alone. On reaching its neighbourhood he was pleased to find that it was still the target of the enemy's fire, for this showed that the British withdrawal had been unobserved, and that it was still believed to be in our possession. He went up to it; it was unoccupied.

He signalled, therefore, to his men to advance to the Engineers' depôt, and the tools were soon in the hands of their lawful guardians. Down knelt the camels, groaning loudly as if to call attention to what was going on; they were quickly laden, and their heads turned homewards. Back the little procession travelled—past blood-stained tombs, broken stockades, deserted houses, empty streets down which at any moment might come the trampling of Sikh guards, and past shadowy gardens, from which a wounded man might use his musket with deadly effect; but eventually

reached the safety of the Engineer camp, not without adventures, but without serious molestation. When Taylor went to bed that night he had the satisfaction of knowing that the Engineer Park equipment was complete. The rescue, however, was only just accomplished in time; next morning the whole of the area abandoned was in the hands of the Sikhs.

To prevent Mulraj's rebellion from growing into a Sikh War by entrusting the Sikh Durbar with the task of quelling it—this had been the political object of the siege of Multan. This object was defeated by the defection of the Sikh Sirdar, Sher Singh, after whose desertion it was clear that a second Sikh struggle for national independence was inevitable. It was further clear, that that struggle would not take place at Multan, but in the home-proper of the Sikhs, the country North of the Manjha, lying between the Chenab and the Jhelum, where fighting on an imposing scale might be expected.

These circumstances made the siege of Multan, *per se*, a matter of secondary importance; it was all-important, however, that the heavy artillery collected there should be set free soon, for it would be urgently needed in the North. It was because all the available troops in Northern India would be wanted by the Commander-in-Chief to meet the new emergency, that the reinforcements necessary to the renewal of the siege were ordered from the South, *i.e.* from Bombay.

In the meantime, General Whish's army temporarily abandoned its position. On the 15th September the forces of the Nawab of Bahawalpur, those of Van Cortlandt, and the Irregulars commanded by Herbert Edwardes, fell back to their new camp in and near the village of Suraj Kund, some five miles South of Multan. A few days later the British troops took up a position on their left. "Our camp," says

Alex Taylor, writing from it on 14th November, "*was* pitched in the midst of high jungle or underwood, some eight feet in height, but by dint of hard labour the ground to our front has been cleared to a distance of about 600 yards, and we are now in a tolerably good fighting position."

The removal from one camp to another of the great quantity of siege-material collected was a large undertaking. Innumerable country-carts—gathered together for the purpose—plied backwards and forwards between the two camps, under the protection of 2000 Irregular Horse and six guns, under the command of Lieutenant Richard Pollock,[1] who defended the convoy from the flanking attacks of Sher Singh's Sikh horsemen. In spite of all efforts, however, sufficient carriage to move so much heavy ammunition was not forthcoming. Edwardes' Irregulars saved the situation. Each of his 1500 horsemen took a cannon-ball —a 16-pounder—into his keeping, and, either holding it in his hand, or slinging it across his saddle, carried it to the new depôt.

The siege was raised on 14th September, and not renewed until the 21st December. This long period of inaction—more than three months—was one of extreme anxiety. Opposite General Whish's small heterogeneous army rose the embattlements of the city of Multan, which was overlooked by one of the strongest citadels in Northern India, manned by 15,000 men who fought with halters round their necks; while for some time Sher Singh—who never came to terms with Mulraj, or was allowed by him to enter the city[2]—lay with his fanatical soldiery to the North-East. It was with feelings of intense relief that the British army

[1] The late General Sir Richard Pollock, K.C.S.I.

[2] It is intelligible that it would have been as distasteful to Mulraj to see his citadel in the hands of the representative of the Lahore Durbar, as in those of the avengers of Vans Agnew and Anderson. Like his father before him, his ambition was to become the independent ruler of Multan.

saw this storm-cloud move Northward, for, had these traitors —Mulraj and Sher Singh—been loyal to each other, and had they attacked the open British camp simultaneously, things must have gone hardly with it. It was known at the time, moreover, that Mulraj was intriguing with Dost Muhammad and other of our Trans-Indus foes, to whom he promised Peshawar and the lands West of the Indus if they would invade the Derajat, and thus force the British army to move away from Multan.

During this interval the Engineers under Major Napier prepared busily for the future active resumption of siege operations. A store of gabions and fascines on an immense scale was made: in December the Engineer Park of which Taylor had charge possessed the enormous number of 15,000 gabions and 12,000 fascines, as well as a number of ingenious mechanical contrivances for the facilitation of the siege operations which had invented by its Director, whose bent in this direction had been acquired in Herr von Fellenberg's workshops at Hofwyl.[1]

Major Napier occupied his subordinates also in making careful maps of the country round Multan, and of the interior of the city and fort—the latter from such reliable information as could be obtained locally. These involved hazardous and difficult scouting, greatly to Taylor's delight. Dangerous reconnaissances were his *forte*; his Chief held his "prudent audacity" in high esteem, and both ordered and encouraged his independent "prowlings" on horseback and on foot; prowlings, from which he garnered an unrivalled knowledge of the ground on which the Force was eventually to take the offensive.

[1] "Major Siddons," writes Herbert Edwardes, "makes justly honourable mention of Lieutenant Alex Taylor, the officer in charge of the Engineer Park, who, with a singular zeal and ingenuity, prepared all kinds of contrivances for facilitating siege operations, making his Park quite a show."

The use to which this knowledge was put is illustrated by the rôle he played in the engagement of Suraj Kund, in which a small body of British Cavalry—by a brilliantly executed manœuvre—expelled 15,000 men from strong entrenchments and captured five guns. In spite of his youth he was granted the honour of guiding this Cavalry charge. "The thing was done at a furious pace," he writes, "and was a great success. The enemy rolled over the banks of the nulla in thousands. . . . I was attached as aide-de-camp to Major Wheeler, commanding the Cavalry. At the commencement of the charge, the Major, myself, and two other officers were in the dust at the same moment! What threw our horses it is impossible to say; most probably a ditch, which in the dust we did not see. Major Wheeler was much hurt, and lost his horse. Fortunately—thanks to Hofwyl—I did neither, and, in a few seconds, was in my proper place, giving the right directions to the heads of the Column, as I was the only person present acquainted with the ground."

Other accounts state what occurred during the next act, *i.e.* when the Cavalry wheeled, and took the guns in flank. They show that Taylor—who had been extensively employed on reconnaissances in that neighbourhood and knew the ground well—successfully located the Sikh guns, which were admirably concealed, leading the Cavalry right on to their flank. The surprise was complete; before the astonished gunners had realised their danger, flashing British sabres were in their midst, some fell, many ran away. Taylor captured one gun, single-handed, charging it on horseback with a wild Irish yell. When the Infantry came up, there was little for it to do but to take possession and destroy the battery; the latter, no easy task, for it was built of the stems of date-palms deeply embedded in the banks of the canal.

On 30th November Colonel Cheape, the Chief Engineer

of the Panjab Army, arrived, and took over the general direction of the siege operations. "Major Napier, therefore, lost the honour of directing the second siege, but in zeal and gallantry in its prosecution he continued, as of old, second to none";[1] so writes Herbert Edwardes.

Meanwhile the Panjab War had broken out in the North. The British army established itself at Ramnagar[2] during the last week in November; after which followed a long period of inaction. Lord Gough was most reluctant to engage the Sikhs until reinforced by the Artillery which was held up at Multan; the siege of Multan, however, could not be attempted until the arrival of reinforcements from Bombay. Lord Dalhousie — who had succeeded Lord Hardinge as Governor-General—held that British prestige was being lowered by this prudent delay, and urged the Commander-in-Chief to give him "a victory." Thus pressed, Lord Gough engaged the Sikhs at Chilianwala, on 13th January (1849), with what result is only too well known.

Before this, however, detachments of the troops from Bombay were beginning to arrive at Multan; and, by the 21st December, the numbers of the besieging army were complete.

On the 27th, the British army, moving *en masse*, retook

[1] Herbert Edwardes, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 564.

[2] It was at Ramnagar that Neville Chamberlain gave an early proof of his mettle. The British army on one side of the ford and the Sikh army on the other had been exchanging a heavy cannonade; gradually the Sikh fire slackened; then ceased altogether. Had the enemy evacuated; or was this a trap, and did Sher Singh intend to open fire on the British Force when in the midst of the ford? Lord Gough called for volunteers to swim the Chenab, and see. Neville Chamberlain came forward immediately—a tall, slim young figure—and was joined by two troopers of the 9th Lancers. The gallant trio, plunging into the river, swam to what would be certain death if the Sikhs were still at their posts. The enemy had abandoned the position, however. Climbing on to an eminence Neville Chamberlain waved his hat to show that all was well; then swam back. He was met on the bank by Lord Gough—a connoisseur in courage—who was delighted with the fine exploit. "The bravest of the brave," he called the hero of the occasion.

the suburbs they had abandoned at the end of the first siege, and extended their position North-Eastward as far as Mulraj's garden palace, Am Khas, 500 yards from the North-Eastern angle of the fort. The rebels were driven in at the Delhi Gate, and positions seized on heights[1] suitable for battering the South-Eastern walls and the Bloody Bastion; the Breaching Battery destined to deal with the latter being only 120 yards from it. As these batteries were completed, one by one they began to belch fire and shell against the walls which they were designed to breach.

Five days after Christmas Day the Grand Mosque within the citadel—the rebels' chief powder-magazine, and hitherto believed to be bomb-proof—was pierced by a shell and blown up. The explosion was terrific; an immense volume of smoke and debris rose in the air, and overspread the sky. "At a vast height," writes Herbert Edwardes, "the heavy cloud stood still, like some great tree, and its shadow fell as night over the camp below. All action was suspended, every eye was turned up in awe, and watched the strange vision sink and disappear."

Finally, on 2nd January 1849, the breaches having been declared practicable, a successful assault was delivered, and the city fell into British hands. Not the citadel, however, into which Mulraj withdrew with 4000 picked men, leaving the rest of his army outside, to die or escape, as fate and their own wits might decree.

During this seven days' siege the pressure on every member of the Engineer Corps was immense; every man of it strained his power of action to the uttermost, and among them not the least untiring in his exertions was the young officer in charge of the Engineer Park.

[1] The configuration of the country will be remembered; the conical mounds of the desert were of course modified by artificial means in the vicinity of the city, but they formed the substructure of the *terrain*.

Two breaches had been made in the South-Easternly portion of the bastioned city-wall :—one in the Bloody Bastion, and the other near the Delhi Gateway.[1] The Column destined to assault the latter was led by Robert Napier; while the perilous honour of guiding the Bombay Column up to the breach in the Bloody Bastion and through it, fell, —at his Chief's request—to Alex Taylor's lot; an honour which was not his by right of seniority.

The latter breach was carried by the 1st Bombay Fusiliers —Lieutenant Anderson's regiment—to whom the place of honour in the avenging Column was given as a right. Sergeant John Bennet of the same regiment planted the regimental colour on the crest of the breach, and stood beside it until it was torn and tattered by bullets. The place was found to contain another trench inside, but this also was taken after a bloody struggle. "Then, from every crowded height and Battery whence the exciting struggle had been watched, rose the shouts of applauding comrades, and through the deafening roar of the musketry which pealed along the ramparts and marked the hard-earned progress of the victorious Columns through the streets, both friend and foe might distinctly hear that sound, never to be forgotten—the 'Hurrah' of a British army after battle";[2] so writes one who was present, and whose vivid words are often quoted in these pages. By nightfall the army was in entire possession of the city.

Alex Taylor had entered Multan at the head of the Assaulting Column, and was among the men temporarily arrested by the unexpected fire from the entrenchments inside the breach. He was pushing into the city with the British soldiery, when a Sikh soldier—standing within the shelter of a doorway, at a distance of about two yards from him—discharged a musket into his left arm, which

[1] See Map, p. 72.

[2] Herbert Edwards, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 575.

happened to be bent and raised at the moment; the bullet passed through it close to the elbow, inflicting a wound in both upper and fore-arm. A soldier bandaged this wound, temporarily, and Taylor—who had no time to attend to it then, as he had important arrangements to make in the interior of the city—struggled on, determined to see these measures initiated.

At the end of an hour, having put his intention into execution, and being both sick and faint, he made his way to the hospital-tent in camp, to have his wound dressed. By that time his arm was exceedingly stiff and swollen, and his hand powerless. To his horror, the surgeon,[1] judging from the position of the wounds, declared that the elbow joint was shattered, and produced his instruments for immediate amputation. This Taylor sturdily refused to permit, maintaining that, as he had used the arm for some time after the wound had been received, it was impossible that the bone should be broken. The surgeon insisted; but yielded, eventually, so far as to put off the operation till the morning, when, *if* the inflammation had subsided, and *if* Taylor could touch his head with his left hand, he promised to grant a further reprieve. The night following the victory, therefore, was spent by the young Engineer in his tent, where he and his faithful "bearer" strove to reduce swelling and inflammation with the aid of cold-water bandages. Their efforts were crowned by success; with a little help from his right hand, his left hand touched his head next morning—his arm was saved. The wound was severe, however, and kept him in his tent for some time.

Meanwhile, having taken the city, the attention of the Engineers was concentrated on the citadel; this was now invested, surrounded by batteries and trenches, and its

[1] Dr Manners Smith.

walls sapped and mined. Day by day, Mulraj and his ill-fated followers saw the ranks of the British army close slowly round them like the coils of a gigantic serpent. On the 21st January it was decided to assault next morning: the interior of the fort had been wrecked by the explosion of the great magazine and by the constant rain of shell that had poured into it for nearly three weeks; the breach in its wall was so complete that the rebels drove horses in and out of it.

That evening Mulraj sent in his submission to General Whish: "Your slave desires only protection for his own life, and the honour of his women. You are an ocean of mercy," he wrote. To which General Whish replied: "I have neither authority to give you your life, nor to take it, except in open war. The Governor-General only can do this. As to your women, the British Government wars with men, not with women. I will protect your women and children to the best of my ability. Take notice, however, if you intend to come in at all, you had better do so before sunrise to-morrow, and come out by the Daulat Gate. After sunrise you must take the fortune of war."

Meanwhile the siege continued.

Day broke fiercely on the 22nd. The fire and thunder of the guns was repeated on a cosmic scale by rolling thunder overhead, and by fiery lightning-flashes piercing the driving storm of hail and rain which lashed the broken fortress walls. Notwithstanding the war of the elements, the British army was standing in readiness to assault, when Mulraj hoisted a white flag. Our guns ceased firing, and the rebel walked out of his shattered stronghold—into which 13,000 shot and 26,000 shells had been poured—and at 9 a.m. was in the tent of the Chief Engineer, Colonel Cheape.

Presently the storm abated; the sun triumphed over

the driving clouds; and the British flag waved from the topmost turret of the citadel.[1]

Then the bodies of Mr Vans Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson were taken from the shallow grave in which they lay, side by side; wrapped in costly shawls, they were carried, not through the gate at which they had been treacherously assaulted, but through the breach made in the walls of the fort by avenging cannons, and were borne upwards, with military honours, to the top of the bastion, where they were laid to rest amid the salute of guns and the pealing of martial music.

Below lay the city, of which Herbert Edwardes says: "Never did broken vessel, left high and dry on some inhospitable shore . . . exhibit a more perfect wreck than the city of Multan. . . . Its streets were strewn with slain, chiefly Sikhs, whose long religious locks, spread wildly on the bloody ground, gave the dead a demoniac look. . . . There was scarce a roof or wall in the city which had not been penetrated by English shells, while whole houses, scorched and blackened by the bombardment, seemed about to fall over the corpses of their defenders."[2]

"*They can kill us two if they like; but we are not the last of the English. Thousands of Englishmen will come down here when we are gone, and will annihilate Mulraj, and his soldiers, and his fort.*"

These things, Taylor, his arm in a sling, saw, and pondered.

The siege was over, but not the war. Lord Gough in the North was eagerly watching for the Artillery from Multan, the arrival of which would enable him to deal the crushing blow he had been meditating so long. The whole of the

[1] Herbert Edwardes, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 587.
[2] Herbert Edwardes, *op. cit.*, p. 576.

Bengal Army was put into rapid motion for the North, part of the Bombay troops being left to garrison Multan.

Taylor was thanked in orders by the Chief Engineer for his exceptional exertions during the siege, and, but for a disagreeable *contretemps*, would have marched immediately with the Engineer Park. Instead of doing this he was detained at Multan, having been put *under arrest* by the Commanding Officer from Bombay, to whom he had had orders to deliver a portion of the engineer stores, because some of the implements originally in his charge were not forthcoming, having been either lost or consumed during the siege. This unpleasant episode soon came to a close, however, and Taylor — naturally rather sore and angry — rejoined his Corps and took over his charge of the Park, with which he then marched more than two hundred miles Northward to Gujarat, arriving at the Commander-in-Chief's camp on or about the 18th February 1849.

On his arrival he found that the officers commanding the Engineers—Colonel Cheape, and Major Robert Napier—were making strenuous efforts to inform themselves of the location, character, and strength, of the enemy's position. It was to their unwearied industry, and to the gallantry of their subordinates, that Lord Gough owed the accurate knowledge of the ground and of the Sikh position which determined the successful placing of the guns in the famous artillery-battle which put an end to the war. Reconnaissances were one of Alex Taylor's strong points, as has been seen; his services were immediately requisitioned. The few days which separated his arrival from the day of battle were devoted to scouting of a most dangerous character, for the Sikhs were fully alive to the importance of preventing the British soldiers from obtaining the information for which they sought.

On the day (21st February) of the Battle of Gujarat he

was placed on the Chief Engineer's staff, and, as Colonel Cheape was in attendance on the Commander-in-Chief, was in close contact with Lord Gough throughout the engagement. Early in the fight the horse he was riding was disabled by a cannon-ball, which, moving parallel with the animal, wounded its left side, its rider happening to throw his leg over its back just in time to save it from being torn off.

It was on this day that he received a rebuff which became a classic in the Panjab, and amused him greatly in after years, though not at the time. He had been sent forward with an order, and on the return journey noticed some alteration in the disposition of part of the enemy's forces which were hidden by the lie of the land from his Chief, who was then in converse with Lord Gough; this he very properly galloped back to report, and then—carried away by the excitement of the scene, and his ardent Celtic temperament—actually suggested the movement by which it might be met. Colonel Cheape—who was privately much attached to the young man—fixed him with a withering eye, observing: "Taylor, your modesty will be your ruin." Taylor fell back abashed; his fellow-countryman, Lord Gough, however, covered his discomfiture with his hearty laugh and the remark, "It seems to me, Cheape, that you had better *act* on his advice."

The sun rose on the 21st of February on a cold spring day. The young corn grew green in the furrows of undulating open fields; the distant peaks of the Himalayas shone white against a clear sky; in the foreground lay the strongly-entrenched crescent-shaped Sikh position, manned by 50,000 men, and containing sixty pieces of heavy artillery. At 5.30 the British camp was full of life—it held some 25,000 men and 100 guns—every one was up, brewing tea, and talking; a feeling of good fellowship and excitement was in the air. At 7 all were under arms.

"At 7.30," writes a young officer of the Force, "we advanced in order of battle; quarter-distance, column of brigade at wheeling distance, the heavy guns in the centre, and the light field Batteries at intervals along the line, with the Horse Artillery and Cavalry on either flank. After we had wheeled into line we advanced about a quarter of a mile, and then the enemy opened on us from the whole of the front. The round shot flew about us, and ploughed up the ground in all directions. Five or six men had been knocked down in as many seconds when we were ordered to lie down, and the Artillery advanced about two hundred yards to the front, the big guns opening first, and instantly the roar of more than a hundred pieces shook the very earth, pitching round shot and shells into the enemy from less than three hundred yards. They returned our fire with great spirit and precision.

At the end of an hour we were ordered to advance another hundred yards, and then lie down again. A Company from each regiment in the Brigade was sent up to the front to support the troop of Horse Artillery attached to us, and, poor fellows, they suffered dreadfully, being brought in, one after another, wounded, some with legs torn off, some cut in half, some torn with grape, until scarcely half our rifle Company was left. All this time the fire was hot on us, carrying off three men at a time, shells bursting over us, scattering the earth in our faces . . . this lasted about two hours, during which time the enemy's fire was evidently slackening. Then a very annoying fire was opened upon us from a village about two hundred yards in front, and our Brigade was ordered on to storm it. Our men, who had been held down all this time, started up with a cheer. It was the last many of them gave, poor fellows! A round shot took off a man's head close to me, and spattered his brains in my face, the bullets whizzed about like hail, and, as we came nearer, grape was poured into us, but not a man wavered for a

second. 'Officers to the front! lead on your men!' shouted the Major, and we sprang forward amidst a shower of balls, dashed across a deep nulla, gave one rattling volley, and poured into the village at every point. Many of the Sikhs stood and fought like men, but the greater portion—about 1000—left the village at one end as we entered at the other. Those that remained were shot or bayonetted on the spot. There was no quarter given. . . .

Presently we found ourselves under a hot fire of grape and canister, totally unsupported, as we had advanced in front of the whole line to storm the village, and the troop of Horse Artillery had been obliged to retire, being temporarily disabled. . . . A troop of Horse Artillery dashed past us at a gallop, drew up, unlimbered, and returned the enemy's fire. The whole of the Infantry was seen advancing, our guns poured in a withering fire, the enemy left theirs, and fled. The Cavalry charged in among them, and the Horse Artillery rattled on at a gallop, mowing them down in heaps, while we took possession of their guns and camp, leaving the Cavalry to deal with the fugitives; and awful execution they did amongst them, as we heard afterwards. . . . No attempt was made at rallying, the rout was complete. . . . The whole line of their flight was strewed with their dead. . . .

At sunset our camp arrived, and I pitched my tent, but there was no food to be got, so I dined off a cup of tea. . . . At 9 next morning—before we could get any food—our Division and the Bombay forces were ordered to march in pursuit. . . . After swallowing a cup of tea, off we started, leaving our wounded behind; and marched all day under a blazing sun, the men suffering from want of water; after marching fifteen miles many of them dropped. . . . When we arrived at our halting-place for the night, everyone was knocked up, . . . we had hardly tasted food since

yesterday morning, we had had no water, and were under an Indian sun. A little after sunset our tents came up, when I got the first meal I had tasted for forty-eight hours."[1]

Such was the Battle of Gujarat—the "Battle of the Guns"—and the day succeeding it, as experienced by a subaltern of the line, one of those who "have to do the dying business."

Taylor's comment on the same engagement represents the different point of view of a member of the Staff. "The fight at Gujarat," he writes to his sister, "will stand upon record as the most extraordinary engagement we have ever fought in India. It was nothing but a cannonade, not more than four of the regiments engaged fired a shot or were personally engaged with the enemy, yet the overthrow was most complete. The fact is, the Sikhs are as fine and as brave a set of men as are to be found anywhere, but, like all undisciplined and half-barbarous men, they are—as compared with us—deficient in that type of courage which enables a regiment to stand to be cut to pieces or shot down, without being itself engaged. The Sikhs will never stand still under a heavy fire; if they are not allowed to close, they will very soon give way; but, charge them with a bayonet, and they fight like fiends. Our former mistake lay in not recognising this. At Gujarat we made no charges, but brought a heavy fire of artillery on them, and in one hour the result of the action was decided. I hope people in authority have learned a lesson. Our loss at Chilianwala was 2300 men, and our gain not very tangible. Our loss at Gujarat was 800, and the Sikh Army was entirely disorganised."

After the battle, Alex Taylor was appointed Adjutant of Engineers under Major Napier, and in that capacity accompanied General Gilbert's army of pursuit—12,000 men of all

[1] *Leaves from the Journal of a Subaltern*: William Blackwood, Edinburgh & London, 1849, pp. 148–162.

arms—which drove the Sikhs as far as Pindi, and the Afghans through the Khyber Pass. He was unable to join immediately, however, being detained at Gujarat to make arrangements concerning the organisation and distribution of the engineer stores.

A few days elapsed, therefore, before he and Captain Morton of his Corps rode out to join Sir Walter Gilbert's Column, which, in view of the amount of impedimenta—guns, ammunition, tents, etc.—it carried, they hoped to overtake speedily. But in this they were disappointed: the circuitous tracks to the rear of the advancing force were blocked for miles by a confused and impenetrable mass of carts, baggage-animals, and camp-followers, through which they found it impossible to force a passage. They were, however, fortunate enough to meet a native of the district, who undertook to lead them across country to a point from which they could head the Column.

After he had left them, they were riding down a country lane leading obliquely on to the line along which Sir Walter Gilbert's Column was advancing, when, to their dismay, a large body of Sikhs suddenly rounded a wooded mound and rode in their direction. As they were so close as to make any attempt at escape futile, the two Engineers had no choice but to ride calmly and deliberately forward. The lane was narrow; the Sikhs rode past them in single or double file, and so close as almost to brush their shoulders, but left them untouched—either thinking that the two officers had ridden ahead of troops which were close behind them, or, being too anxious to escape to their own villages as soon as possible, to stop to dispatch a couple of Englishmen. As long as they were within sight of the enemy, Taylor and Morton maintained the composed pace at which they had ridden past them, but, no sooner had they rounded a spur of land which hid them from sight,

than, putting spurs to their horses, they broke into a smart gallop, and were heartily thankful to find themselves ere long, safe and sound, in the British camp near Manikyala, South of Pindi.

They learned that our troops had found the passage of the Jhelum fords a tough job; they were two in number, and separated from each other by an island. "It was a very broad stiff stream," writes one of those who forded it. . . . "I saw several camels swept off their legs, and carried down with their loads. A lot of bullocks, also, and horses, were drowned, and a few camp-followers, but our men (the writer's regiment) all got safely across in about two hours, . . . halted on the island for an hour or so, and then marched down to the other ford. The first one was bad enough, but this was tremendous—about two hundred yards in breadth, very deep, and the stream running like a sluice. It was fordable only by elephants, and camels without their loads. Lots of the latter, who missed the ford, were carried down the stream and drowned."

Sir Walter Raleigh Gilbert maintained the pursuit for weeks; and so relentless was the chase, that, on the 12th March, the whole Sikh Army surrendered to him—unconditionally. Alex Taylor had the good fortune to be present at this dramatic spectacle. Standing at the base of the great Buddhist *tope* which was then associated with the name of Alexander and called the "Tomb of Bucephalus," the worthy descendant of the Elizabethan hero received the submission of the Sikh Chiefs and of the remnant of the Khalsa which had believed itself strong enough to challenge the power of Britain. Parting for ever with their beloved weapons, these brave warriors threw their swords—symbols of the martial ambitions which their Guru, Govind Singh, had organised, and Ranjit Singh had nationalised—at the feet of the representative of the conquering nation, reverently salut-

ing them before they turned to accept the coins given them by the British Government to speed them peacefully on their homeward way. "Ranjit Singh is dead to-day," they said, sadly.

The great ceremonial of surrender was continued into the next day. Our soldiers, dragging artillery across the hills, commanded a splendid bird's-eye view of the pathetic pageant. "The scene from the summit when we reached it was superb," writes one of these climbers. "Our Division . . . crossing the river and winding along the plain; the Sikhs trooping slowly in, and throwing their weapons on the glittering pile, which shone like silver in the bright sunshine; the Bombay camp pitched at a short distance . . . and all round the black wild mountains with bright green patches of cultivation in their bosoms"—this is what they saw. . . . "It was a most lovely afternoon," adds the writer, "a fresh sweet wind blowing over the mountains filled one's mind with visions of home."

Our troops meanwhile—moving with artillery—pressed on in steady pursuit of the Sikhs' Afghan allies, whom, it was hoped, they might overtake and destroy at the Attock ford and boat-bridge. It was a stiff struggle, this race between Dost Muhammad and Gilbert for Attock; the Afghans had a considerable start and less impedimenta. "The days were fine and cool," writes one of the army of pursuit, "and the country beautiful; hill and dale thickly covered with wood, and all in one purple glow from the carpet of flowers which entirely hid the earth."

The hilly roads, however, were so bad that though the troops—dragging artillery with them—made a march of sixteen miles, and then a forced march of twenty-six,[1] being

[1] "By Jove, when you read in books of such and such a General having advanced rapidly by forced marches, you have but a vague idea of what the poor devils of soldiers have suffered," writes a subaltern of the Force,

on the move all through the night of the 17th, they did not succeed in catching the Afghans at Attock, or in preventing them from cutting the bridge-boats adrift and even burning some of them.

On the following day, the 18th March—a Sunday—the troops rested, while the Engineers strained every nerve to float a bridge of boats across waters which one of those present describes as "rushing with awful rapidity through their rocky channel, forming a thousand eddies and whirlpools." Messengers were sent up-stream and down-stream to collect the boats which had been set adrift, for each of which a hundred rupees were offered; some of the injured boats were repaired; and thus, by one means or another, the Corps succeeded in providing the troops with a rough, narrow bridge, by which they crossed next morning, to continue their pursuit of the Afghans, whom they still hoped to catch and crush outside the Khyber.

This was Taylor's first introduction to the Indus at Attock—a section of the river with which he was afterwards intimately connected; it was under his charge for more than a quarter of a century.

After the artillery and troops had crossed the river—a difficult operation—had negotiated a steep and narrow pass, some three miles long, and had debouched on to a verdant plain, clothed for miles with green grass and carpeted with purple flowers of most delicious fragrance, they learned that Dost Muhammad had passed on the preceding day at the head of some 10,000 men. They pushed on, therefore, by forced marches to Peshawar, which they reached on the 21st, to find smoking cantonments and the Afghans gone. The Khyber was now their goal, and it was not until the Northern fugitives had found refuge within the jaws of the Pass that the clatter of the hoofs of avenging horsemen ceased to ring in their ears. "They rode down the hills

like lions (Singhs), they ran back like dogs," was the disdainful Sikh comment. They had escaped; that was not to be denied.

Peshawar was occupied by British troops. The campaign was at an end.

The heat by day was excessive, and the nights were very cold. The troops, worn out by fatigue, exposure, and months of bad and irregular food, were ravaged by fever, dysentery, and scurvy. Taylor, therefore, instead of returning to Ferozpur in order to resume his post of Assistant Engineer, was sent to Pindi to help General Sir Colin Campbell[1] in the selection and preparation of a large camping-ground, destined to be converted into cantonments for a big body of mixed troops, native and European, when the Panjab had been annexed. Time pressed, for the hot weather was at hand, and Sir Colin was anxious to "hut" his 3500 British troops immediately. Water had to be found, and temporary shelters to be erected. The General was inclined to place the cantonments on low ground near the Leh Nulla, because of the water there. Taylor, however, begged to be allowed to experimentalise on higher and healthier land, and, after sinking several unsuccessful shafts, succeeded in tapping sweet water at a depth of some 130 feet. This "find" fixed the site of the present large cantonments of Rawalpindi.

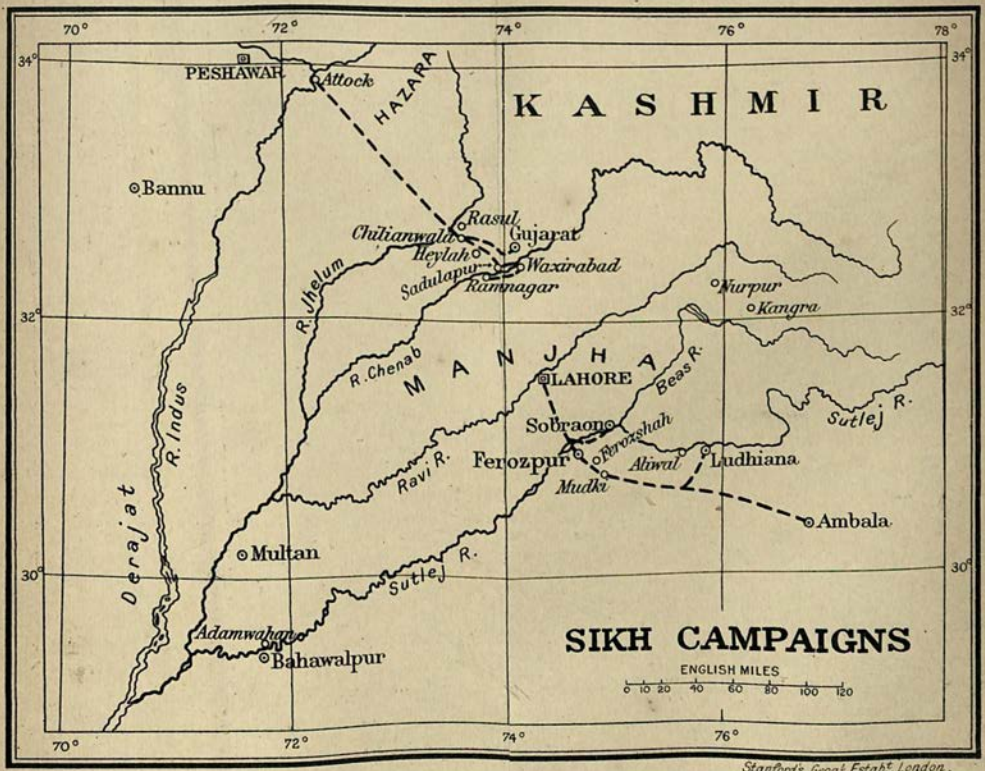
Then came the pressing question of housing the white troops during the deadly heat of the fast-approaching summer. The time at Taylor's disposal was very short, building materials *nil*, and the necessary timber not procurable in the bazars. He then lit on the following expedient. The upper slopes of the Himalayan spurs—which project, buttress-like, into the plains—were covered with magnificent firs. He invaded these mountain forests at the head of an army of natives; suitable trees were cut down by the

[1] Afterwards Lord Clyde.

thousand, carried down to Pindi, and there formed into open thatched shelters, beneath which the soldiers' tents were pitched; a temporary expedient which answered admirably. These sheds, which were very high—care having been taken to leave a considerable space between the tops of the tents and the thatched roof overhead—proved cool and efficient shelters from the burning sun; the troops beneath their shade enjoyed exceptionally good health. The nucleus of the delightful health-resort of Murree, moreover, soon rose on a mountain-side which had been stripped of its mantle of fir.

The hutting of the British troops accomplished, Taylor at last really found his way back to Ferozpur, where he was chiefly employed in regulating his office-accounts, which, owing to his eighteen-months' absence, were naturally much in arrears—a task little to his liking.

Thus ended his experiences of the Second Sikh War. The Khalsa had appealed to the arbitrament of arms; they lost the day, but accepted defeat with dignity. A very few years were to elapse before our brave opponents were to step to our sides as valued comrades. Since then, Sikh and British have fought shoulder to shoulder on many a hard-won battle-field both in India and in the furthest East.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CHAPTER IV

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PANJAB —THE LAHORE-PESHAWAR ROAD

HAVING been twice attacked without provocation by the Sikhs—who had thus demonstrated the incompatibility of their independence with the security of our adjoining territory—the E. I. Company had no choice but to depose Ranjit Singh's ten-year-old son, Dhulip Singh, and to add the Panjab to its possessions.

The new Governor-General—Lord Dalhousie[1]—who, unlike his predecessor, Lord Hardinge, was the enthusiastic advocate of a policy of annexation, devoted his genius and energy to making this measure a success. The task of civilising the newly-acquired Province was inspiring, and a grave responsibility. The Panjabis were turbulent, high-spirited, brave, and generous. The resources of the country were undeveloped. Lord Dalhousie was able, and—in his autocratic Western way—passionately philanthropic; the executive powers he wielded were practically unlimited; and, at the time of his accession to office, a group of men of unparalleled administrative ability and purity of character was already associated with the Panjab. Amongst these one stood forward as pre-eminently fitted to fill the post of Chief of the Administration—Colonel Sir Henry Lawrence, who, as a younger man, had distinguished himself on both

[1] Governor-General, 1848–1856.

the Afghan and Sutlej frontiers; who, before the late war, had been Resident at Lahore; and whose knowledge of the Province, personal prestige, and influence with the Chiefs, was unique.

Unfortunately his policy differed diametrically from that of Lord Dalhousie. He looked on the recently accomplished annexation as a deplorable necessity, resulting from the tactless manner in which the local aristocracy had been managed during his enforced absence in England. All his sympathies were with the dispossessed Chiefs, who, in his opinion, had been forced into revolt by the martial patriotism of the Khalsa, and by our half-hearted support; he was therefore inclined to treat them with the greatest leniency. The Governor-General, on the other hand, stigmatised the Sirdars as venal traitors, who had abused our generosity, and was convinced that the prosperity of the Panjab depended on the creation of a large class of hard-working, loyal, and well-to-do yeomen, and on the systematic elimination from the body politic of the Panjab feudal lords, who, shorn of the power of irresponsible oppression, would never, he was sure, live contentedly under our rule. His views were those of John Lawrence also.

So acute was the antagonism, both temperamental and political, of these two statesmen, that Sir Henry soon tendered his resignation. Lord Dalhousie, however—being determined, not only that the Panjab should be "run" on his principles, but that those principles should be put into practice and presented to its native population under the "ikbal" of the beloved Henry Lawrence—devised the following scheme. He arranged that the Panjab should be governed by a Board of Administration consisting of three members—Henry Lawrence, John Lawrence, and Charles Mansel.[1]

[1] The "travelling, working, and sleeping partners" of the well-known epigram.

To Henry Lawrence—who was only induced to accept the post by the hope held out by Lord Dalhousie that his presence would serve to mitigate the severity with which his protégés, the Chiefs, would otherwise be treated—fell, by right, the post of President of the Board, and the leadership of the Political Department; John Lawrence was entrusted with the collection and disbursement of Revenue and the inauguration of Public Works; while to Charles Mansel—whose place was soon taken by Robert Montgomery—was allotted the somewhat unenviable position of buffer between the clashing views of his colleagues.

This arrangement, though obviously temporary in character, and fraught with pain to the two brothers, worked excellently, as far as the Province was concerned:—each of the Lawrences, while working miracles in his special branch, prevented the other from pushing his views to an extreme; while the splendid personal integrity and ability common to both, struck the note to which the public life of the Province was attuned.

This Board was well seconded: "Ask for whom you will, and I shall give him to you," Lord Dalhousie had said, and he was as good as his word. The quality of the men for whose assistance the Lawrences asked, or who were drawn about them by the force of elective affinity, is proved by the results achieved. George Lawrence, James Abbott of Hazara, Reynell Taylor, Richard Pollock, Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, Wardens of the Marshes—Colin Campbell and Sir Walter Raleigh Gilbert, Harry and Peter Lumsden, Neville and Crawford Chamberlain, on the military side—Robert Napier, with Alex Taylor on his staff, both of them soldiers and engineers;—these men were foremost amongst those who helped the Lawrences to "make the Panjab." Some of these names are household words throughout the length and breadth

of the British Empire; while those of others were revered for generations on the scenes of their labours.[1]

Nor must the talented Secretary—Richard Temple—be forgotten, in whose glowing annual reports the achievements of the Board were recorded.

Thus formed and thus administered, no wonder that the Panjab became the "model Province" of India. In after years, when the "Triumvirate" was a thing of the past, John Lawrence would answer those who sought to trace the secret of its successful administration to a system, with the words: "It was not our system, but our men." This was the simple truth. It was character—his, and that of his colleagues and subordinates—which made the Panjab what it was.

The first duty of the rulers of the Province was to ensure the safety of life and property within its boundaries. No easy task. Its warlike inhabitants were still smarting under unexpected defeat; the country-side contained a dangerously large percentage of ruined Chiefs and men of foiled ambitions; the proud members of the disbanded Khalsa, which had recently put 100,000 men into the field, were at large, and bitter must have been many a heart among the Sikhs who had beaten into ploughshares swords which had been the glory of Govind Singh's "Lions." Moreover—the great mountain ranges which bound the Panjab on three sides were inhabited by wild tribesmen, accustomed from time immemorial to live by raiding the plains.

Of civil government in the Western sense, there was little or no trace: Ranjit Singh's ideal had been an invincible army and a full treasury: the latter existing to support the former, while revenue was collected as best it might.

[1] For years after James Abbott had left Hazara, the traveller was led to view a stone which had almost sacred associations for the people. "It was on that stone that Father Abbott sat," they would say.

The Board of Administration secured the Province from external attack by the establishment of a cordon of fortified posts round the frontier. These were manned by Panjabis and Sepoys, and officered by Europeans. A few British troops were stationed at places of great strategical importance. Peshawar, for instance—which not only commands the Khyber Pass, the gateway through Afghanistan into Central Asia, but also the Indus, the waterway to the Indian Ocean —was manned by 2000 Europeans and 8000 trained and experienced Sepoys. Other military posts—Attock, Jhelum, Lahore, etc.—were held by smaller bodies. The sum total of the Regulars stationed in the Panjab was 54,000 men.

Invasion from without being thus guarded against, and the incursions of the hill-tribes checked, the people of the Panjab proper were disarmed; 120,000 weapons of the most divers kinds were collected, strange to say, without opposition. An armed Police-Corps was organised (15,000 men); and ten Panjabi regiments were cautiously raised, both services being officered by Europeans. The most remarkable of these Irregular Corps was the Guides. Raised and organised by Harry Lumsden in accordance with suggestions made by Henry Lawrence, this celebrated Corps was composed of the most redoubtable fire-eaters and dare-devils of the Panjab, men of excellent mettle, who did splendid service in 1857, and inaugurated so gallant a tradition that in 1897 it had thirty-two men in its ranks who wore the Star for Valour. These local military levies, together with the Mounted Police Force, were not only invaluable *per se*, but, incidentally, absorbed much of the dislocated aristocratic and martial element afloat in the Province; a legitimate and honourable field was thus provided for the abilities of men who would otherwise have given trouble.

Personal security of a primitive kind being established,

the Triumvirate drew up a very simple code of laws, the statement of which covered a few sheets of foolscap. These laws—which, with a few exceptions—such as the absolute prohibition of suttee, infanticide, etc.—were little more than a revised and expurgated re-statement of existing local customs—were vigorously enforced. Dakaiti,[1] and Thagi[2] were stamped out. The interests of the agricultural and commercial classes were carefully considered: the existing system of land-tenure was examined, simplified, made uniform and stable; land was reassessed, and land-taxes greatly reduced, with the result that the agricultural prosperity of the country increased by leaps and bounds. All transit dues, all import and export taxes were abolished, trade was allowed to flow unimpeded on its natural course: commerce therefore expanded. Steps were taken to promote education and sanitation; a uniform coinage was issued—there were, then, 110 coinages in circulation—prisons were built, in which the criminals housed were taught a trade.[3]

Great public works—chiefly roads and canals—were inaugurated on a scale recalling the engineering feats of the ancient Romans. The earlier canals excavated by former rulers, notably by the Mughals, were repaired and rendered serviceable. New canals also were constructed on a huge scale, foremost amongst these being the Bari Doab Canal, 247 miles in length, which, originating in the head-waters of the Ravi near Nurpur, fertilises the arid wastes lying between the Sutlej and the Ravi.

[1] Dakaiti = systematic gang-robbery with violence, performed by armed bands: 37 dakaits were hung in Amritsar in one year, 7 only in the next—in a few years this crime was extinct.

[2] Thagi = the religion of a body of professional assassins, devotees of Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction. In 1835, 1562 thags were taken in India, and either hanged, transported, or imprisoned for life. Thagi is now practically extinct.

[3] Ranjit Singh had declined to be troubled with prisoners. His punishment was mutilation—the loss of a hand or nose.

Nor were means of locomotion and transport neglected. Three years after the annexation of the Panjab, the Triumvirate were able to state that "1349 miles of road had been cleared and constructed, 2487 miles traced, 5272 miles surveyed. And this, exclusive of minor cross and branch roads." To this amazing report of work achieved must be added the construction of 100 large bridges and of 450 bridges of lesser dimensions. This feat—for it was nothing less—was performed in an *unsurveyed* country, far from the resources of civilisation, and most variable in character; a country—mountainous, sometimes, and sometimes level; wooded, sometimes, and at others, treeless, sandy, sun-baked, and salt-bitten—across which ran the beds of wide rivers, which were sometimes alluvial, level, shoally, and shifting, and sometimes rock-bound and precipitous, but, almost always, the channel of waters gathered in distant gigantic mountain snowfields.

The installation of civilisation in a wild country is costly in the extreme. It would have been natural, therefore, if the Panjab had proved a heavy drain on the Company's purse during the years immediately following its annexation; the reverse, however, was the case. By a miracle of financial administration, John Lawrence actually made the Province "pay" from the beginning, even when his roads and canals—afterwards sources of income—were in course of construction, and although his two chief colleagues, Henry Lawrence and Robert Napier, were constitutionally incapable of economy. The balance-sheets of the first years of his administration showed a large surplus; and in 1857—the year of stress and strain in which the whole fabric of our Anglo-Indian Empire was shaken to its foundations—he was able to send twenty lakhs of rupees (£200,000) to Delhi, there to minister to supreme Imperial needs.

At the urgent entreaty of the Triumvirate, Lord

Dalhousie gave them Colonel Robert Napier as the head of their Public Works Department. He had been Consulting Engineer and right-hand man to Henry Lawrence before the annexation, and knew the Panjab, geographically, politically, and socially, as it was known to none other. A man of wide outlook, fertile in expedient, and of iron physique, he had ridden over the country professionally from North to South and from East to West, and was cognisant, not only of its resources and of its wants, but also of the great difficulties which would impede the use of the one and the satisfaction of the other. He was, moreover—personally—an ideal initiator of difficult and beneficent undertakings: his hand and brain were of steel, and his soul that of a lion, but his heart was fatherly, and as tender and guileless as that of a little child. These qualities earned him a position in the lives of men only comparable with that held by his friend, Sir Henry Lawrence, for whom it was said that not one man in India, but many, would have been prepared to die. It may be added that he took full advantage of his empire over the whole being of his subordinates to make them work as he did himself—unremittingly. "More than this," writes Bosworth Smith, "he was a man of vast ideas. He had something in him of the 'great souled' man of Aristotle—the beau ideal, as the whole of his subsequent career has proved him to be, of chivalry and generosity. If a thing was to be well done, and without a too close calculation of the cost, Napier was the man to do it."[1] His ideas found expression in those splendid public works which are the pride of the Panjab, and are still a model for the rest of India.

The privilege of choosing his subordinates was accorded to him, as it had been to the Board. When confronted

[1] R. Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, 2 vols., Smith, Elder, 1883, i. p. 304.

with the task of selecting the man to whom he would entrust the most difficult of the ".labours," for the success of which he himself was responsible, viz. :—the construction of the great military road destined to connect Lahore with Peshawar—he bethought him of the young subaltern who had piloted him and the Multan siege-train two hundred miles down the Sutlej in pontoon-boats ; and of the resolution and resource with which that officer had met the many critical dilemmas inseparable from such a journey. Having further considered the zeal and determination of which he had availed himself throughout the two sieges of Multan, the proceedings at Gujarat, and during General Gilbert's pursuit ; and also the ingenuity with which his subaltern had dealt with the problem of sheltering the white troops at Pindi from the dangers of a tropical summer ; he came to the conclusion that his quondam Adjutant was the man for whom he sought ; and this, although Alex Taylor was then only twenty-four years of age, had never been employed on any great work of civil engineering, and had had no experience of road-making.

Taylor, therefore, was sent for, was told that he had been appointed executive head of this great undertaking, and was directed to set to work immediately. Much touched by this proof of the high estimation in which his character and intelligence were held by Robert Napier, and determined to merit his Chief's good opinion, he entered on the honourable and arduous work allotted him with feelings of mingled elation and consternation.

What was the character of the task thus suddenly imposed ? The highway, some 278 miles in length, destined to connect Lahore and Peshawar, was first and foremost a military road—the dorsal column of the strategic system of the Panjab. It was essential, therefore, that it should contain no curves or gradients incompatible with the easy

passage of heavy artillery ; also, that it should be furnished, at intervals of not more than fourteen or fifteen miles, with encamping grounds large enough to accommodate two infantry regiments, at least, with their animals and baggage. It was further necessary that these encamping grounds should be provided with water for both man and beast—wells and troughs—with sarais in which wood, grass, grain, and other things necessary to an army in motion could be stored, and with buildings suitable for shops, or market-places, at which both natives and Europeans could purchase necessities.

The Lahore-Peshawar road, however, was not designed to further military purposes only ; it was also intended to open up the Province, commercially and socially. Towns and villages being few and far between, travellers and traders were forced to encamp in the open at night and during the heat of the day. Open spaces dedicated to this purpose were, therefore, associated with the highway ; when feasible these were some two or three acres in area, were placed at intervals of two or three to a march, were provided with wells, and thickly planted with shade-trees. The creation of these "Travellers' Groves" was a departure from the system usually obtaining in other parts of India, where the great main-roads generally lie between double avenues of trees. The grove-system was preferred in Northern India for three reasons: (1) the avenue-system would not have been practicable in a hilly country where the road ran frequently through deep cuttings ; (2) nor in a wild country largely grazed by camels and goats, from the ravages of which it is easier to defend trees planted in compact, fenced, and centrally-watered areas, than in interminable lines ; (3) it was found that natives prefer to travel in sun and dust, and to eat, rest, and sleep in deep, dustless shade, near water, rather than to travel, eat, and sleep in partial shade and perpetual dust.

Dak-bungalows—slightly furnished rest-houses for Europeans—were also constructed along the route. They were provided with a minimum service, and "tubs"; dak-stations with stabling, ponies, and stage-carts (dak gharis), were added at intervals of four to five miles.

These encamping-grounds for troops in motion and for native civilians, and these rest-houses for Europeans were part of the permanent establishment of the road, and were maintained by the Public Works Department. The Engineers, however, needed temporary shelters, offices, etc., while they were engaged on their arduous task of calling the road and its accessories into being. Their needs may be classed under three headings: (*a*) housing, both for the members of the European staff and their servants, and for the army of native labour employed; (*b*) fairly equipped hospitals, near the great centres of work; (*c*) properly fitted offices for the skilled draughtsmen, estimators, accountants, and clerks who carried on the daily business of this large department; (*d*) depôts for tools; (*e*) timber-yards; (*f*) work-shops, provided with apparatus for special purposes—as at Pindi, where the expensive plant connected with the boiling-in-oil of the great masses of timber so largely used both in house- and bridge-building was collected, or, as at Jhelum and Attock, where large saw-mills—the first in Northern India—were established, and which, under Taylor's fostering care, became headquarters of the boat-building trade.

The question of labour was difficult of solution, for whereas there was but a small and fluctuating surplus of labour in the normal provincial labour-market, the number of workers required for the construction of the Road alone—and it was *one*, only, of the great works inaugurated by Colonel Robert Napier—rose sometimes to as many as 60,000 men. Some means had to be devised by which this army of voluntary workers should be regularly recruited,

fed, housed, paid, and their numbers maintained at a constant level. The great canal works South of the Ravi absorbed all the available down-country hands;—roadworkers, therefore, had to be raised locally. The headsmen of the neighbouring villages were directed to collect and send in gangs of coolies. Numbers of the poorer Sikhs, tempted by relatively liberal wages, came in of their own accord, and this, although agriculture and not manual labour was their recognised pursuit. Many low-caste Hindu converts to Sikhism (Mazbi Sikhs), who had found but an uncomfortable niche in the ranks of their adopted co-religionists, not only joined the labour-army, but afterwards did useful military service during the Mutiny, and still form the nucleus of several regiments of Panjab pioneers.

No recruits were drawn from the Trans-Indus Pathans, those proud Moslems, who, it will be remembered, refused to dig trenches at Multan for other use than their own. In 1850 they still looked on the service of the white Sarkar as degradation. Other hill-men, however, came in: prominent amongst these was a fine stalwart race of workers from further afield—tough men of Mongolian descent from the slopes of the Hindu Kush mountains.[1] These mountaineers, however—denizens of countries which are cold in winter and temperate in summer—declined to face the Panjab "hot weather," and this, in spite of the excellent quality of the shelter with which they were provided, their good wages, and the cheapness and accessibility of their food-stuffs. Their presence in their own hill-villages at harvest-time was necessary to their scheme of life. During the summer, therefore, the difficulties connected with the raising of labour became acute. This was aggravated by sickness in the camps, by epidemics of smallpox, cholera, fever, and ague, and by

[1] On pay day these men would kill a sheep, and abandon themselves to Homeric feastings with interludes of cock-fighting.

the omnipresent malaria resulting from exposure and the upturning of riverain soil.

Notwithstanding these difficulties the work was gradually organised and progressed merrily. The great army of often wild and turbulent workers gave but little trouble. Indeed, some of Alex Taylor's assistants had a genius for so handling natives as to get the maximum of work out of them at a minimum of pressure. Among these, one of the foremost was the well-beloved and high-spirited "Buster Browne,"[1] whose methods commented the proverb, "More flies are taken by molasses than by vinegar."

The following anecdote, recounted in after years by his Chief, Alex Taylor, points its own moral. "Early in the 'sixties," so Alex Taylor writes, "Browne was attached to the Lahore and Peshawar trunk road, then under construction, and was posted as an Assistant Engineer to the frontier division near Peshawar. The work requiring the earliest attention was the bridge over the Bara river, the chief difficulties in the construction of which were the depth of the bed—soft mud—in which the piers had to be founded, and the liability of the river to sudden and heavy floods. Browne set to work at the close of the rainy season, and not long afterwards I paid a visit of inspection.

In the mud, two open excavations for the piers were in hand, and everyone was very busy. Near one of the excavations, seated on the top of a not very dry mound of earth, was Browne, his shirt-sleeves rolled up, and his shirt-front open; on the same mound, but on a lower level, and somewhat to his left, was a cashier with a supply of small coin. In a similar position, somewhat to his right, was a sweetmeat man; while, between them, were musicians of the country, playing spirit-stirring airs. The procedure was

[1] The late General Sir James Browne, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., R.E. (late Bengal Engineers).

simple. The mud-drenched coolie came up the slope from the excavation with a basket full of mud on his head. Having emptied the basket in the prescribed place he walked to the cashier, and received a coin, which he placed in security; he then moved to the sweetmeat-purveyor and, receiving a 'goody,' put it into his mouth, much to his satisfaction, while the stirring sounds of the musicians helped to circulate his blood. Browne from his mound could see the workmen in the excavation below, and encouraged them by gesture, and by words also, when a pause occurred in the music. So the work went busily on.

These arrangements answered capitally. It was found necessary to carry the foundations to a greater depth than had been expected, but Browne's energy and cheery stimulation rose with the increasing difficulties and infected everyone. The piers were finished before the inevitable flood came. The workmen continued happy and willing, and the bridge was completed in very satisfactory time. Everyone on the work had a good word to say for Browne; all declared that they had never worked for such a sahib!"

The undertaking, the general character of which is thus baldly suggested, was obviously one of great magnitude and beset with difficulties. It would be hard, however, to exaggerate the extent to which these difficulties were increased by the special circumstances under which the Road was constructed. The Panjab was then (1850) a wild, roadless, and lately conquered country of the most varied geographical configuration; unsurveyed and unmapped. The Engineers entrusted with the task of driving a road across it were without machinery and without plant. Wheelbarrows, even, were suspected novelties, and it was some time before workmen, accustomed to carrying loads on their heads or shoulders, could be induced to use them. All mechanical appliances had either to be improvised on the spot

or procured from England. England, however, was then separated from India by a three months' sea-journey, while weeks of marching—along what were often, not roads, but mere tracks—lay between the Panjab and the sea. The time which elapsed between the dispatch of an order to an English firm, and the receipt of the goods needed, was generally about ten months.

Again, the physical configuration of the country was such that records of its rainfall and of the variable volumes of its river-waters were peculiarly necessary to its Engineers: for the Panjab is crossed diagonally from East to West by mighty rivers, fed either by heavy rain or by the melting snow of vast Himalayan glaciers. No records of annual rainfalls existed, however, and no register either of the periodicity of floods, or of maximum flood-levels—information essential to the road- and bridge-maker.

In short, the great undertaking entrusted to Alex Taylor had to be started *ab initio*—everything had to be either made, prepared, evolved, or collected—surveys, machinery, statistics, workers.

In order to form a correct idea of some of the difficulties with which the Engineers had to grapple, it is further necessary to realise the character of the country through which the road was destined to pass in its double capacity of military highway and commercial thoroughfare.

The first problems that arose were connected with alignment. This, in the first instance, depended on strategic considerations, for it was necessary, obviously, that this military road should connect the points at which the British army in the Panjab was massed. It was also necessary—destined as it was to promote general traffic, and to open up the country commercially—that it should be in touch with the commercial and political centres of the Province.

Before the British occupation of the Panjab the means of locomotion in the Province were limited. Village was linked to village by tracks, beaten bare by the feet of pedestrians and the hoofs of horses and kine, and rutted by the wheels of laden bullock-carts. The general direction of these tracks was most erratic, being determined by the accidental position of wells and springs—for the possibility of encamping nightly beside water, accessible to man and beast, is essential to the oriental traveller. Viewed in detail, also, they were tortuous in the extreme, for they passively followed the line of least resistance, and were deflected by such accidents as an outcropping rock, a fallen tree, a house of call, and the like; they were, moreover, variable in width, for, when too deeply trenched by cart-wheels for convenience, bullock-drivers widened them by simply bearing to the right or left, even when, by doing so, they trespassed on the fringe of neighbouring cultivation. During the rains these pathways were impassable; hard sun-baked ruts melted into mud and grass grew high and green; but when the dry weather set in, numerous feet and cart-wheels soon beat out a new, but generally conservative, way on the old lines.

Goods were carried along these tracks—the only means of communication between village and village, and town and town — in bullock-carts, or by camels in the low-lying regions. In the hills, however, where the paths were too precipitous to admit of the passage of either wheels or camels, merchandise was committed to the backs of hardy hill-bullocks, and, even—when the ways became still wilder and more heroic in character—to those of special breeds of mountain-goats and sheep, each of which carried some six or seven pounds on a little pack-saddle. These sure-footed and agile beasts journeyed in herds, and were protected from leopards by fierce and powerful dogs.

The country destined to be traversed by the Lahore-

Peshawar road falls into two great areas of totally dissimilar character; the one stretching—roughly speaking—from the banks of the Ravi to those of the Jhelum; and, the other, from the Northern bank of the Jhelum to Peshawar.

The first of these divisions is a low-lying alluvial plain, crossed by rivers of variable volume which are sometimes mere trickles of water wandering among sandbanks, but, at other seasons, sweeping floods, miles wide, running in shallow, ill-defined, and wandering beds. The latter, on the other hand, consists of rolling highland, deeply scored by ravines and invaded by spurs of the great mountain-ranges which bound Northern India; it is intersected by rocky channels cut through barriers of living rock by great rivers, which, in the time of the melting snows, sweep as mighty torrents through the gorges they have cleft.

The alignment of the highway across the plain lying between Lahore and Jhelum presented no special difficulties; it ran without obstruction—speaking generally—from city to city, and was, practically, a surface road raised eighteen inches or more above the normal level of the area it traversed. All the problems with which its Engineers had to deal were the result of the character of its rivers and river-beds; or, in other words, were the inevitable outcome of the combination of mountain-born, glacier-fed rivers and an alluvial riverain. They may be summed up in one word—variability; variability, both of the volume and of the course of the waters to be bridged.

It is obvious that soft and friable river-banks must necessarily result in wide and shallow river-beds, for it is impossible for water to cut a deep channel for itself if its bed be so soft as to retain no impression and therefore to tend constantly towards a level; and, equally clear, that alluvial river-banks are peculiarly liable to give way under the onslaught of floods fed by melting snows, or even by heavy

tropical rain. A single such landslip on a large scale suffices to change the form of a river-bed, and thus give its waters a new direction—a new direction which cannot fail, eventually, to carve out a new river-bed. Such "slips" were the invariable concomitant of every flood. The courses of the rivers crossing the plains were consequently most variable.

The Chenab at Wazirabad, for instance, at one season of the year was a narrow stream threading an intricate way through a network of lagoons, shoals, and sandbanks, but, a few months later, a rushing river, five miles wide, threatening to undermine the city walls. A year or two subsequently, however, it might be separated from the city by three miles of waving cornfield. The difficulty of bridging a stream of such erratic habits is obvious: it consisted, not in constructing a bridge, but in persuading the river to run under it, permanently.

Another river in this area may be described as typical. The Baghbachcha—"tiger-cub"—crosses the Lahore-Peshawar road at a distance of some thirteen miles from Lahore, and, with its tributaries, affects it for some twenty-one miles. This small and apparently innocent stream is liable to rise very suddenly; the rainfall of its local water-shed sometimes amounts to twelve inches in twelve hours, or even to four inches in an hour. Under such circumstances the stream is difficult to manage; as the Engineers found to their cost during the early days of their acquaintanceship with it. For on one occasion, after an exceptionally heavy rainfall, it rose suddenly, left its ill-defined bed, and "rushed" the comparatively high land on which the road-makers had stored their bridge-materials and pitched their tents; with these, it played the very "tiger-cub"; doing away, in fact, with tents and stores altogether.

The difficulties caused by this variability of bed and volume were met by two expedients: (1) by the "training"

of the rivers in question, and (2) by the construction of so-called "Irish bridges." By the training of a river is meant the expensive process of so disciplining its whole upper course by the erection of works, walls, and dams at critical points, as to steady its whole career. As the courses of the Ravi and Jhelum cover a distance of some 450 and 500 miles, respectively, from their sources to their junctions with the Chenab; and as the Chenab covers 750 miles from its source to its union with the Indus,[1] it is obvious that this process, inevitably tentative at first and the fruit of gradually acquired experience, cannot but be lengthy and exceedingly costly. The road, however, was wanted immediately, and at the least possible expense. Economy was the order of the day; for John Lawrence, and not Robert Napier, held the purse-strings.

Experimental "training works" on a small scale were put in hand immediately; and later—when the course of the river to be crossed had become sufficiently stable—"Irish bridges," or "gaps," were constructed. These "Irish bridges," says one of their makers, Mr Fenner, were so called because their inventor, Alex Taylor—known to his Panjab friends as "Musha"—was an Irishman; also because of their character, for they were designed to let the river they bridged run *over*, and not *under* them! But, though undoubtedly Hibernian in this respect, they were serviceable, and, like other bridges, were intended to speed the passenger across a water-obstruction. They partook, in fact, rather more of the character of permanent masonry fords than of bridges-proper, and were constructed as follows. The carefully metalled road, when it reached a certain distance

[1] The length of the Thames is 209 miles; of the Seine, 482; of the Po, 417; of the Rhine, 850; while the Indus measures 2000 miles from its source in the glaciers of the Great Kailas to Hajamro, where its stream mingles with the warm salt waters of the Arabian Sea. The scale of the rivers of India is gigantic. See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition, Cambridge, 1910.

from the stream it was destined to cross, sloped at an easy gradient of 1 in 33 to meet the water-bed, ran across it, a little below the normal bed-level, and rose out of it at the same angle. They were usually about twenty-four feet in width, were paved with rough stone-work, and were protected on either side by drop-walls, above which towered a series of poles destined to guide traffic at times of high water. When the river was low, the "Irish bridge" was merely a dip in the road; when it was high, it was a slightly-flooded dip in the road; when it was in flood, its waters flowed harmlessly and freely over the "bridge" in a circumscribed channel; the passenger then encamped on the river-bank, waited until its waters subsided—which was generally a matter of hours only—leaving the "Irish bridge" intact and serviceable. This expedient, which was often avowedly temporary, answered perfectly: it rendered the river passable, pending the time when the complete training of its upper reaches should have rendered the construction of permanent bridges feasible, and, in view of their costliness, justifiable.

If the location of the road traversing the alluvial plain between Lahore and the neighbourhood of the Jhelum river —the ancient Hydaspes—were easy, its alignment from a few miles South of the Jhelum river to Peshawar was a task of extreme difficulty, owing to the sudden transformation of the plain into "heavily rolling country, intersected by numerous drainage lines and their arteries, forming ravines which are sometimes enormous, and notable for their precipitous sides."[1]

The bridges on this Jhelum-Attock reach of the road

[1] The following reminiscences by an old Artilleryman suggest steep gradients and rough country:—

"1850. We went by the old Bukrala Pass along the old paved Sikh road. . . . As we descended the Pass, one of the locking-chains of a wagon-team broke on the steepest pitch of the Pass, and nothing could have saved the

were many; the most important being the Sohan bridge,[1] which has a clear waterway of 945 feet, *i.e.* fifteen arches, each with a span of 63 feet. Many of them were largely built of timber, the smaller examples entirely so.

The difficulty with which the Engineers obtained wood suitable for this purpose is a good illustration of the absence both of supplies and of normal carriage, which added so enormously to the strain of dealing with the problems with which they had to grapple. Attock and Jhelum had long been emporiums for timber grown in the Himalayas and floated down by river. This wood, however, was generally in the form of short logs, which were useless for engineering purposes. Beams on a larger scale were acquired by the roadmakers in the following manner. In order to meet their requirements, thousands of the magnificent *Cedrus Deoaara* of the upper reaches of the Indus and Jhelum were felled, and their rough unhewn trunks cut into shafts, 35 feet in length; these were cast into the surging river, and, eventually—after months of

team from going over the 'Khud' but the presence of mind of the native corporal who rode the near leader; instead of pulling up and trying to check his team . . . he gave the order, 'Gallop,' and went down at *full* gallop, swinging round the right angle at the bottom of the Pass in most masterly style, and brought his team down the very steep incline. Had he done otherwise, all would have rolled over. After crossing the Jhelum again on ascending the Kuri Pass, one team of 'stud-breds' regularly 'funked' the hill, and for want of pluck to put their shoulders to the work, shut up on the ascent, and the whole gun-carriage, horses, troopers, and all, were rolled back, and went over the side of the 'Khud,' falling some sixty, or eighty feet." It is satisfactory to note that he adds: "The next time I passed along this road—myself in command of a field-battery—it had been made easy for us by the construction of a fine level road, even beyond Pindi as far as Peshawar on the extreme north-west frontier."—Newall, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

[1] This bridge was not finished till 1868. It is built of stone with brick arches, and cost about £43,000. The greatest depth of the Sohan river at this point is 15 feet (in flood); mean velocity 13 feet per second, with a computed discharge of 91,000 cubic feet per second. Its drainage area covers 573 square miles. "This bridge," writes Mr H. A. S. Fenner "is a grand monument to its designer—Colonel Alex Taylor."

romantic water-life, having blocked the crest of cascades, gathered like shoaling-fish in shallows, or lain wedged between rocks—were carried on the crests of the great floods caused by melting snows to their predestined gathering places at Jhelum and Attock, whence they were drawn like gigantic whales, conveyed into the newly-evoked timber-yards, and roughly fashioned—by hand at first—into what were called "Peshawar beams."

Jhelum and Attock, however, were tens of miles distant from the ravines and roaring waters which these great shafts were destined to bridge—tens of miles, not of civilised road-ways, the easy path of heavy traction-engines, but of wild mountain-tracks. It was the Engineers' business to convey these long and weighty cedar-shafts up steep mountain-ways, down sudden rough descents, along partially-made cuttings, across unbridged rivers, until they were finally deposited, one by one, on the collecting-ground of the bridge of which they were designed eventually to form part. All the while the only means of carriage at their disposal were the local bullock and bullock-cart, with native drivers. Nor even when the Herculean task of getting the heavy pieces of timber on to the desired spot was safely accomplished, was the precious convoy safe; for the magnitude of the sudden floods to which these mountain-rivers are liable was at first incredible, and more than once put the fruit of so much effort into grave jeopardy, especially during the early days of the Road, when all its makers were new to the undertaking.

When the Hurroh bridge was under construction, for instance, a heavy storm in the Murree hills brought its waters down in a wall, twenty-two feet high, which carried away a portion of the partially-constructed bridge and such of the bridge-stores as were within reach of the onslaught of the advancing flood.

Sir James Browne has left an admirable account of the

attack of a typical flood on the Bara bridge when under construction, written in June 1861, soon after the arrival on the bridge-works of a large pile-engine, the only one in India, and proportionately precious. "Last Saturday," he writes, "I got the pile-engine put up all right—a great big timber framework about thirty-two feet high and about twenty feet long—right in the middle of the river,[1] and expected to begin work with it on Monday. Early on Sunday morning a man rushed in saying that the river was coming down, five feet deep, and that I had better look out. Out I rushed, and secured the engine with chains, ropes, and bolts as best I could. I had no time to dismantle it, and had barely time to do this, when the flood was on us. The engine gently rose, and 'crick, crick' went all the ropes and chains, to my great dismay; but, after swaying about a little, it got to its right bearings and stood out manfully. The worst was over, and the chains and ropes seemed quite sound. The river did not rise more than five feet, and went on flowing quietly at that depth.

In the evening all seemed right, and the river was going down, so I went up to the roof of the house and to bed. About 12 o'clock I heard a great shouting from the men I had put on guard higher up the river, and, tumbling out in my night-shirt, I rushed to the pile-engine, to give the ropes an extra pull or two. In about three or four minutes I saw the water coming down, one huge wave, about two hundred feet wide, and about sixteen feet deep—a wall of roaring water! On it came at the rate of fifteen or sixteen miles an hour, tearing down the river banks as it came, foaming and fretting in the moonlight! It was a very grand sight, but not to my liking. By this time I had about two hundred coolies assembled with guy-ropes, so I scuttled on shore, and anxiously expected the effect of the first shock.

[1] The dry river-*bed*.

Down came the river, like a wild beast, breaking high over the pile-engine, which bent, and swayed, and rocked, whilst the chains were tightened till they were like solid bars of iron. Suddenly a great hay-stack appeared, bearing down with tremendous velocity on my unfortunate charge. One snap, one shock like the report of a rifle, and one of the small chains broke. One after another went the chains, sending the coolies flying in all directions with cut faces and bruised bodies; and off went the huge machine, bobbing and ducking, as if chaffing us for all our trouble. Four of my Sikh guards and I plunged in after it, and down we went, holding on like grim death, with a regular pandemonium of blackies rushing all along the bank. First on one side, then on the other, going round the corners with tremendous velocity, now turning round and round on an edge like a top, now plunging along in a straight reach, now stopping for a second, then off again with a jerk!

During these manœuvres the Sikhs and I had twisted four of the chains together; these we fastened to the great ram for driving in the piles—a huge mass of iron weighing about two tons, which was prevented from slipping into the water by two large beams between which it slid. A carpenter swam out to us with a hatchet, and turn by turn we went at these beams, hitting as never men hit before, till, with a plump, the huge piece of iron slipped into the water. Slower and slower we went along, the chains tightening more and more, and at last we were still, firmly moored by the ram, which had caught into the ground and held us as firm as a rock.

In that short time we had gone down about four and a half miles; and about a mile further down was a fall in the river about fifteen feet high—five minutes more, and we would have been over it. *We* were in no danger, as we could easily have saved ourselves by swimming ashore, but not a

vestige of the pile-engine would have remained, as it would have been smashed to pieces by the fall. As it is, we have saved everything, thank God. One of my men was bitten by a snake, of which at least a hundred were crawling about the pile-engine. It was nasty seeing their cold scales and glistening eyes and feeling afraid of touching anything for fear of being bitten, knowing as we did that most of them were poisonous. The worst of it was that I had to walk home for five miles without shoes, as not a shoe had we in the company. It would have rather startled you to see me walking into my bungalow as I did that day in my night-shirt, *et præterea nihil*, and covered with mud and water from head to foot."[1]

The Indus at Attock, however, provided the Engineers with the most difficult of the problems they were set to solve, viz., the substitution of a permanent way for the ferry and boat-bridge, which, since time immemorial, had spanned one of *the* historic river-reaches of the world: a comparatively narrow neck of water across which India's Northern invaders — Alexander the Great, Tamerlane, Babar, Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah the Abdali — had marched from the mountain-gorges of Afghanistan into India, and across which the goods of Central Asia and India have poured throughout the centuries. Akbar, statesman that he was, recognising the strategic importance of the position, built a picturesque fort of cut stone to command the bridge and ferry (1581); and planted a colony of some two hundred picked boatmen in its neighbourhood, whom he attached to the spot by grants of land—which their descendants still hold—and the monopoly of the dangerous water-traffic.

The gorge at Attock is an arena in which the power of

[1] *Life of General Sir James Browne, R.E., K.C.B., K.C.S.I.*, by General McLeod Innes, R.E., V.C.: John Murray, London, 1905, pp. 55–57.

natural forces is displayed on so titanic a scale as to amaze the European, with his experiences of similar phenomena writ small. It is worth while to dwell on the spectacle presented there, not only that our imaginations may bow before the realisation of so august an embodiment of the ideas of velocity and volume, but that our intelligences may divine something of the magnitude of the task set the young roadmakers, when they were directed to bend these forces to the service of man—and that, quickly and economically, for so John Lawrence willed it.

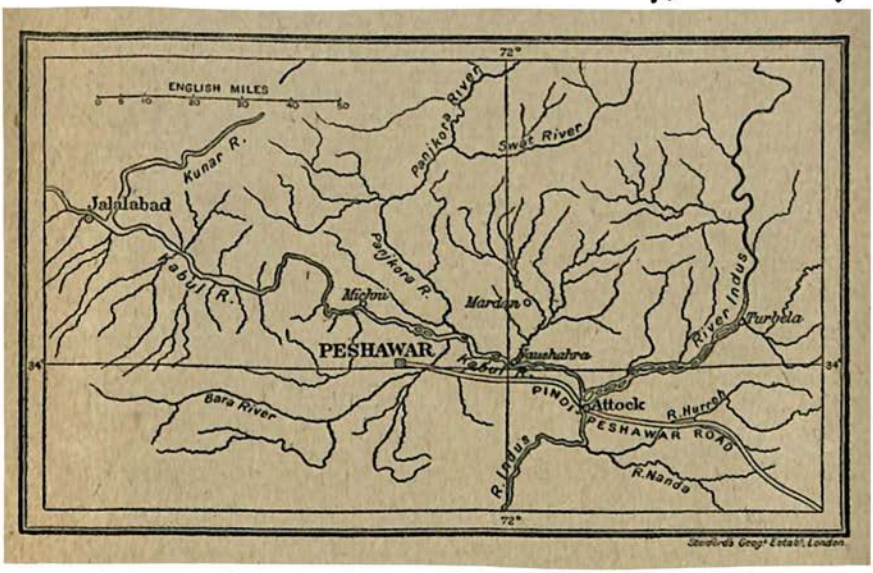
The Indus, when it reaches Attock, has already travelled some eight hundred miles from its birth-place—and that of its great sisters, the Sutlej and the Brahmaputra—in the virgin snow-fields of Kailas (20,000 feet). Having flowed through the deep valleys of Ladakh and Kashmir, through majestic mountain scenery on a scale unmatched in the world, and through the wild cedar-clad passes of Hazara and Kohistan, it enters the Peshawar valley at Turbela, having been replenished throughout this long course by many and great rivers, and having sunk from an initial altitude of 15,000 feet to that of 4605 feet at Bunji in the neighbourhood of Gilgit, to 1160 at Turbela, and finally to 891 at Attock.

The gradients of the forty miles which separate Turbela from Attock being slight and the river-bed open and shallow, its waters broaden there into an expanse three miles or more in width, set with islands, and broken in the cold weather into a network of streams which are sometimes fordable.

A little above Attock the volume of the Indus is almost doubled by the influx of the great river of Afghanistan—the Kabul river, of terrible memories—which embodies the whole drainage of the Hindu Kush mountains, and, through a tributary, that of Chitral also; and which, after its entrance into the Peshawar valley has been further reinforced

by the confluence of the great Panjkora and Swat rivers from the North and of the Bara from the South.

Almost simultaneously with the reception of this immense accession to its volume, the channel of the Indus hardens and contracts. The river enters an iron gorge, cloven by the ceaseless attrition of fretting currents in the ridge of black adamantine slate which once dammed its course and forced its waters—together with those of the Kabul river—back into the Peshawar valley, which they



occupied as a lake; a lake which gradually receded as the river slowly chiselled a deepening rift in the live rock. These wild waters—descended from the glaciers of distinct mountain-systems separated from each other by hundreds of miles, and suddenly herded together between narrow and unyielding confines—rise rapidly from a depth of a few feet to some eighty to a hundred feet in flood-time, and rush, with a velocity which sometimes rises to twenty miles an hour, along the hard rock-channel which is their bed. When this is smooth, they move with the polished, oily,

snake-rush of a sluice, but, if tossed and torn by projecting rocks and ridges, break into boiling and seething whirlpools and rapids. After a fierce race of a hundred miles through an austere and awe-inspiring gorge, the river suddenly emerges at Kalabagh—and presently the column of water, which had advanced with such sinister velocity down a channel some two or three hundred yards wide, is seen to collapse as if fatigued, and sometimes spreads itself over a riverain twenty-five miles in width.[1]

As has been said, this snow-born, torrent-fed river and its tributaries are liable to sudden floods, which are so well known to result from the breaking-down of some accidental dam in their upper course, that, on the occurrence of a rapid and abnormal fall in their volume, the dwellers on their banks will forsake their homes and escape with their children and cattle to neighbouring heights, for they are sure that the temporary cause of the sinking waters will presently give way, and that its collapse will herald a flood.

The greatest of the recent Indus floods is that of 1858. A landslip upstream liberated an immense volume of dammed water, which, unable to escape sufficiently rapidly

[1] "The Father of Waters . . . cuts its tortuous way through a hundred miles of rock from Attock, till it breaks out into an apparent ocean, its shores on the horizon at Kalabagh. In June, the rains have not commenced, but hundreds of miles of mountain have poured their snows by innumerable channels into the ancient river, and the rush of its mighty volume between its narrowed banks of granite, and the roar and foam of its maddened waters, are things to hear, see, and remember! . . . The rocks and the cliffs above them are black as ebony, white as marble, or brilliant red or orange, varied with the yellow sand and bright green bushes at the mouth of numerous ravines."—Newall, *op. cit.*, pp. 193, 194.

The discharge of the Indus after the junction of the Panjnad (*i.e.* its united Panjab tributaries) is sometimes as high as 460,000 cubic feet a second. In the high flood-season its waters carry into Sind silt to the amount of 6,480,000,000 cubic feet in three months. The area of its basin is computed at 372,000 square miles.—See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article "Indus," 11th edition, Cambridge, 1910.

through the gorge, rose some eighty to ninety feet at Attock, and headed the Kabul river back to Naushahra—twenty-eight miles distant,—its backward rush being at the rate of twelve miles an hour.[1]

But to return to the Indus at Attock. The difficulties associated with bridging it arose from two sources—its velocity, and the immense variations to which its volume is liable—the mean rise of its waters in flood being thirty-five feet above their normal level; while the actual rise at times of exceptional flood is sometimes more than eighty to ninety feet, as was the case during the flood of 1858. Alex Taylor proposed to elude these difficulties by means of a suspension bridge, which, had it been carried out, would have crossed the Indus at the Fort of Attock by a single span of 750 feet, at a probable cost of twelve lakhs of rupees (then £120,000). "A most noble work, which would be of incalculable importance not only to the defence of the frontier, but also to the political and civil strength of the British Government"; so runs the notice in the Provincial Report. Owing to lack of funds, however, this project was never realised.

An alternative project for the construction of a tunnel under the Indus was laid before the Panjab Government in 1858, during Alex Taylor's absence in England on furlough. John Lawrence sanctioned the driving of a small preparatory heading. This was put in hand immediately, under the energetic superintendence of Taylor's valued assistant, Lieutenant Chalmers, who employed his own Native Pioneers (Mazbi Sikhs), and six privates of H.M. 94th, who happened to have been Miners. This heading was completed in 1862, but in the meantime the project had proved itself unworkable and was abandoned, leaving no record of its

[1] The station was destroyed on this occasion, and with it a considerable series of letters written by Alex Taylor from the Delhi camp to his future sister-in-law Mrs Henry Graham, whose husband was quartered there.

existence but banks of debris. Another unsuccessful experiment was tried: a "flying bridge," *i.e.* a cable swung from masts raised on either shore, along which ran a pulley-block connected by rope with a large ferry-boat below. It was finally decided that, until the Indian Financial Budget would permit of the erection of the great steel bridge[1] which alone could meet the requirements of the case, the Public Works Department would do well to content itself with the maintenance and improvement of the existing bridge of boats.

The Ravi, the Chenab, the Jhelum, and the Indus—to speak only of the main rivers of the Panjab—each already boasted its boat-bridges and its flotilla of ferry and freight boats, locally manned. Ranjit Singh, with military emergencies in his mind's eye, had always insisted on this. Taylor raised their numbers, and gradually evolved special types of boat suited to the peculiarities of the waters in which they were to ply and the purposes which they were destined to fulfil. He further created great boat-building centres—furnished with European sawmills and other machinery—at Jhelum and near Attock.

The Attock ferry and bridge were in his charge for more than a quarter of a century; its boatmen—the descendants of Akbar's Muhammadan colonists—were men precisely to his taste, and he knew most of them personally. He describes them thus: "They are constantly employed in navigating laden and unladen boats through the wild gorge below Attock, and are exceedingly bold and skilful,

[1] Erected by Sir Francis O'Callaghan and Mr Johnson. Finished in 1883. "The bridge has five spans, each of 400 feet, carried on lofty steel piers of open iron-work. Those in mid-stream are protected by detached masonry piers which act as cut-waters to shield the piers-proper from logs, trees, etc., brought down by floods. The railway is carried on the top member of the girder, the roadway on the lower. The bridge heads are protected by small strong forts, loopholed for musketry."—H. A. S. Fenner.

but the work is dangerous and the casualties are many. From their birth . . . they are accustomed to boats, and to an awe-inspiring river, to rushing waters and dangerous rocks, and the result is a race of men of courage and skill, whose steady nerves and cool heads carry them safely through circumstances which the boldest sailor, unless born to the place, might well think hopeless. They are, of course, to be seen to the best advantage on their own river, but I have employed them often on other mountain-rivers, and have never, under any circumstances, seen them surpassed. They are magnificent swimmers, and are very skilful in travelling long distances on single inflated cow-skins."

The Attock boatmen are emphatically *men*, they are trained to dominate the fierce natural forces with which they are surrounded, and the buffetings of which are their chief education—they know and love a man. Brave and exceptionally virile as were the leading Englishmen with whom they had come into contact, or of whom they knew by fame—Alex Taylor was their hero, for not only was he *their* Sahib—technically—not only had he strengthened the yoke lying across the neck of their river, and not only had he constructed boats which carried them lightly over the turmoil of its brimming floods, but, a stranger to their waters, he had performed a feat from which all but the bravest among them shrank: he had swum the river, despite its fierce whirlpools and rapids.

The thing was done in this wise. A little below the bridge of boats a great space of water leads to an area—mid-stream—in which shoulders and ridges of up-cropping rock fling the swift current into a succession of gigantic glassy mushrooms, hollow-centred, laced with foam, and compact of swirling movement; below them, tending shoreward, flows a racing stream, bordered on the further side by a clear pebbly

back-water. Now and again a boatman—and this was rightly considered a feat which permanently established his right to be one of those to whom others touch their foreheads—would be rowed to the edge of the upper whirlpool; rising in the prow of his boat, he would fling himself with a cry into the boiling turmoil, in which he was immediately engulfed; presently, he would be tossed to the surface, only to be dragged under, instantly; and again tossed up. Meanwhile, the brave man's fellows in the boat, watching the repeated appearance and disappearance of the dark heap which was the body of the swimmer, would drift downstream, outside the orbit of the whirlpool, and, presently, would see their hero swimming shoreward with the current, and finally, lying safe, but exhausted, on the banks of the backwater, accredited—a passed graduate of the river!

Taylor watched this exploit with admiration; the resolution shown, the nerve, cool head, and physical endurance appealed to him. It had then been performed by no Englishman. Why should this be? It is true that the boatmen—born on the spot and bred in boats—were semi-aquatic, and knew the river as a child knows its nurse's face. Still, what man has done, man can do. A great desire was on him. The bright face of danger smiled alluringly. He began with characteristic prudence to *study* the subject. He had no wish to lose his life; on the contrary, his desire was to swim the Indus at Attock. Day after day he had himself rowed out to a spot above the upper maelstrom. Into this he flung logs, the movement of which he carefully observed and timed. He saw that the forces of which they were the impotent playthings were two: one, that of the local whirlpool, which pulled them under and flung them up; and the other, that of the main momentum of the flood, which carried them steadily downstream, and launched them, eventually, into comparatively smooth, if quickly-

flowing water, and, finally, into the neighbourhood of the backwater near the bank. The boatmen had demonstrated that a man could live through the hurly-burly of the commencement of the adventure. Taylor was convinced that this was only to be achieved by an initial policy of non-resistance, *i.e.* by submitting without a struggle to the caprices of the whirlpool—and thus economising strength—in the assurance that it would eventually fling the swimmer into the smooth main-rush of the river with his forces sufficiently unimpaired to deal with further difficulties himself.

On a certain day, therefore, he and Leonard Bean[1]—one of his subordinates on the Road—had themselves rowed out to the maelstrom, "to take their luck." Mr Bean, at the last moment, deeming discretion the better part of valour, declined the adventure. Alex Taylor, however, leapt into the heart of the boiling waters, abandoned his passive body to their will, was again and again alternately submerged and flung to the surface, and eventually found himself, battered and breathless, but unexhausted, swimming for dear life through the smooth racing flood towards the backwater, in the shallows of which he finally lay: worn out, but, perhaps, the first Englishman who had swum the Indus at that dangerous point.[2] Other white men, brave and skilful swimmers, have repeated the feat since then; to Taylor, however, belongs the honour of having shown the way. *C'est le premier pas qui coûte.*

But to resume the tale of the Road. The preliminary work of launching so great an enterprise was exceedingly

[1] One of three popular brothers, all in the Panjab service, and known in the Province as "Broad Bean"—Leonard, who was of substantial build; "French Bean"—John, who had lived on the Continent, and had charming manners; and "Has been"—Charles, who was of a melancholy and retrospective temperament, and finally, died.

[2] "This fine feat was the talk of the Attock boatmen for more than a generation," writes Mr Fenner.

heavy. During the time of its initiation the leading Engineers had to live in the saddle, in order to familiarise themselves with the general lie of the country and with its most salient physical characteristics. Although their life was not devoid of passages of acute discomfort, it was, as a whole, enjoyed by the healthy and able young men who lived it. It was never anything but hard, and its accessories were of Spartan simplicity, but it was set to the good old tune of "something attempted, something done"; it was strenuous, combative, interesting, and freighted with adventure and difficulty. The road-officers lived either in tents, or in slightly furnished, solidly built bungalows, the heavy squat silhouettes of which suggested fortifications, rather than homes; and this is what they were—defences against the burning darts of the sun.

A hot dry summer, during which a register of 120° F. in the shade was not infrequent, was followed by the rains, during which a great fall of temperature brought no relief, for the air was surcharged with moisture, and fever and ague became part of the day's work. On the monsoons followed a time of rejoicing—blue cloudless days, sinking into frosty nights during which the tired sleeper exulted in a blanket. It was during this season—the "cold weather"—that the greater part of the outdoor work was done; road-officers then took to their tents, or, in their own parlance, "went into camp."

The 270 miles of road under construction were broken into seven sections, each of which was entrusted to an Executive Engineer, with a suitable staff of assistants and a clerical office. Each of these Executive Engineers was a picked man, of whose personal gifts no one was more appreciative than his Chief, who was always very conscious of the qualities of his collaborators, and of the corporate ability, loyalty, and dogged sense of duty of his staff,

without which the realisation of so difficult a common end would have been impossible.

Alex Taylor, as Superintending Engineer, was responsible for the successful execution of the project as a whole; to his lot fell the general inception, direction, organisation, and execution of the scheme. Having sketched its main lines, he scanned, criticised, allowed or disallowed every project connected with its realisation, keeping a keen eye on the maintenance of a high standard of execution. Notwithstanding the length of the highway, the number of independent sections into which it was broken, and the variety of the problems which arose, he had the whole thing perfectly in hand, and was well aware of the special difficulties with which each group of his subordinates was grappling.

As the most difficult part of the road lay between the Jhelum and the Indus, he established his headquarters at Pindi, half-way between these two rivers. His presence on this section seemed ubiquitous. The members of his staff used to declare, jesting, that whenever they found themselves face to face with an insuperable obstacle—a "stumper"—a figure on a galloping horse was sure to rise on the horizon, and presently Taylor would be in their midst, alert, resourceful, compact of common sense, and intent on devising a "gym" which would "diddle *that* difficulty."

The work was to his liking, and he flung himself into it *con amore*. The strain of the life, however, was very great. How great is shown by the way in which—in spite of youth, good health, Irish buoyancy of temper, and an iron constitution—he spent Sunday after Sunday during the hot weather. Throughout many summers his tents were pitched near the sun-burnt sites of the difficult cuttings and large bridges lying between Pindi and Peshawar, and within a sixty-mile radius of certain delectable places on the falling spurs of the far-away snow-capped Himalayas.

Saturday after Saturday, when his office was closed, and the week's work had worn to its end, he would ride away from his friends, and make—all alone—for the distant purple hills. Relays of horses had been previously laid out along the route, and he would ride steadily through the gathering twilight, mounting, always mounting, from arid khaki-coloured plains—the homes of aloes and dusty acacias—to a region of wild olive, wild mulberry, and the rosy oleander; and from that again to slopes covered with ilex and fir. Twilight would sink into night, the stars would come out, and presently he would stop at a dak-bungalow for food and an hour's sleep; then, pressing on again—rising, ever rising, into cooler, happier air, dawn would see him at his goal—a native charpoy, placed within the fragrant shadow of a spreading deodar, and in close proximity to a slender mountain-stream. Beside that charpoy, with its rug and pillow, would stand a smiling, bowing servant, with a cup of tea in his hand, and eggs and toast not far distant. The weary man was soon stretched on that bare string-bed, his boots drawn off, his servant at a discreet distance, and throughout that long summer's day he would sleep, and sleep, his dreams embroidered with the silver tinkling of the stream, the cry of the cuckoo, the cooing of the cushat dove, and the perfume of the deodars, while mother-nature with gentle hands—supplemented by those of the bearer, who was a passed master in the art of massage—repaired the damage done by the over-work, the heat, and strain of laborious days. Towards sunset he would rise refreshed, dine, and, having ridden down the hills through the night, would stand, alert and eager, at his post in the hot plains when work was resumed next morning.

Nor was the life on the Road all work. The wild country-side was alive with animals. The Engineers' timber-cutters would come down from the hills with tales

Himalayan bears, great and small, whose sanctuaries had been invaded; and it was seldom that their masters did not follow up the scent. The Trans-Indus mountains were inhabited by the markhor—a wild goat with fine horns, and the barasingha—a deer with magnificent spreading antlers. The Salt Range from Jhelum to Kalabagh was the home of the oorial—an agile, large-horned mountain sheep. In the dry weather the wild life of the hills congregated on the river-banks at certain hours. General Newall deposes to having seen as many as a hundred oorial at a time at the mouth of a gorge—"some, with their square heads bent down, and horns reflected in the water, were drinking; others were standing behind in clumps; while some, with slow and stately steps, were coming down the ravine." The ravines, which the Engineers had such trouble in bridging, were the homes of a graceful gazelle, the chikara. Wild pig abounded in the neighbourhood of Jhelum, but, the country being too rough to ride them, it was impossible to attack them from horseback with the spear.

At certain seasons of the year quails, pheasants, pea-fowl, pigeons, and the grey and black partridge, abounded. At others the sky would be signed across by long processions of migratory geese (the solan); the large white Cyprus crane (the coolon) would stand high in the fields of growing corn; while the marshes and upland lakes (jhils) were populated by wild duck, snipe, and other water-birds. "The variety of duck to be found in India is certainly very great," writes General Newall. "But I think in no country have I found it more so than in that of the Upper Indus and its tributaries. I recollect five being shot off a small pool at Attock, each one of a different species, and I myself had a most enjoyable morning's duck-shooting during the Ambeyla campaign at Turbela. . . . On that occasion, out of the eight couple bagged, seven different specimens

were found, including, I remember, a splendid example of the great mountain mallard."[1]

Most of the Panjab rivers are rich in fish, notably in the mahsir, a large Indian salmon. General Newall speaks of a "treacherous hill-stream, often scarcely a foot deep, but after rain, a thundering torrent, down which horse and man, and even mail carts, have been rolled, and more than one traveller has met his end." This enlarges into a deep pool—near the village Barakao, twelve miles from Pindi—in which on a certain occasion he watched a shoal of mahsir sailing about on the top of the water, their heads and dorsal fins plainly visible above its surface. He also alludes—incidentally—to fish, eighty to one hundred pounds in weight, which he saw rolling about near the ferry-boats at Attock.

When the day's routine-work was over, and the road-coolies had been dismissed, the young Engineer—sallying forth with his beloved dogs and his gun—would get a couple of hours of good rough shooting, and would come back with a bag which was no despicable addition to his larder. This evening prowl, gun in hand, was often a solitary affair; but frequently an hour's gallop would bring two young fellows together for the evening. Often, also, two of them would agree to meet on an off-day; friends and brother-officers would ride out from neighbouring cantonments for a week-end, and then, jollity would be the order of both day and night. The day's shooting or fishing ended in an excellent dinner in which game figured largely, followed by toasts, songs, choruses, and, finally, in spite of the fatigues of the day, with "sports"—so young were the diners—that is to say, by the exhibition of feats of strength and skill, wrestling, jumping, and the like.

"Musha," the Irishman—the overworked executive Chief of the roadmakers—shone on these occasions. His

[1] See Newall, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

spirits were infectious—strongly built, and agile as a cat, some of his performances were long boasted of as records in the Panjab. He is said to have stood on his head in the middle of a mess-table covered with glass, silver, and fruit, and this without deranging as much as a wine-glass or spoon, and then, to have jumped it; to have jumped a dinner-table with a leaf on edge placed across its centre; twelve mess-chairs, also, placed in single file, seat to back, seat to back—a long line; and this, not from springy boards, but from the dead uneven ground which forms the usual floor of a tent. *The* exploit, however, which seems to have impressed his contemporaries more than any other, was the following feat of agility. A dozen solidly-made country-chairs were placed in a row, each at a certain distance from the other. Taylor would then run along the line, stepping on their backs only. So swift was his movement that, though each chair fell as he stepped off it, it did not do so until it had given him a foothold from which to spring on to the next. Cat-like, he ran—skimmed—from end to end of the row, without touching the ground on the way. Another acrobatic feat in which he had no rival was that of running up a wall *over* a picture, hung not too high. His trainers in the Hofwyl gymnasium had had a pupil who did them credit.

Mention has already been made of his success in swimming the Indus. On another occasion, many years later and after he was a married man, he capped this achievement by dropping down the Punch—an unexplored and unnavigable mountain-river, one long succession of cascades and rapids—in a cockle-shell of wicker-work and leather. This is the history of the adventure. He went up to Kashmir for a holiday, in 1868, accompanied by a favourite road-subaltern—Tom Wilson, a big warm-hearted, romantic Irishman, who played the guitar, sang

with sentiment, and was loved, at sight, by all children. Kashmir proved even more beautiful than report had said, and for a time the two friends were happy enough, lazing on lakes; but, presently, Taylor began to sigh for an adventure—something dangerous. They had ridden from Murree to the town of Pūnch, and thence to Gulmarg, and had intended to go back by the same pleasant route, when it occurred to Taylor that it would be more exciting to drop into the plains by water, using for the purpose the torrential river Pūnch, of which they had had occasional glimpses on their upward way.

Now the Pūnch river rises in the great Pir Panjal mountain-group—of which the highest peak springs to an altitude of 15,500 feet,—is fed by the drainage of the Western and South-Western flanks of these giants, and, after a precipitous course of some 100 to 120 miles, flows into the Jhelum near its débouché into the plains at Tangrot, some forty miles above Jhelum town, of which the altitude is 827 feet. The course of the river from the town of Pūnch to Tangrot was an unknown quantity to the travellers: the character and extent of its drainage, however, gave a clue to the character and volume of its waters, while the fall of its bed suggested the velocity of its stream. As far as they could learn, no human being had ever dared to follow the windings of its precipitous course within the sounding gorges through which it had cut its way from Pūnch to Kothi, some forty miles above Tangrot. Report spoke of this Pūnch-Kothi section as an utterly unnavigable succession of snarling rapids, foaming cataracts, and sheer drops into rock-bound pools. The more wise-heads shook their beards, the more gravely they pronounced the words "dangerous" and "impossible," the more delectable did the adventure appear to Taylor, and the more foolhardy to Tom Wilson. At last the two

travelling companions agreed to part amicably. The younger man, declining to risk his neck for the mere fun of the thing, rode quietly home.

Taylor, however, wrote to his wife, then at Murree, for a certain small walnut-shaped leather-covered wicker-boat which he and his old Addiscombe and Chatham friend, Dan Robinson, had had built for duck-shooting, and which was so light that two coolies could carry it on their heads to Pūnch. He also wrote to one of the head boatmen at Attock, whom he held in high esteem, and whose life had been a tissue of adventures on turbulent waters. To him he said—"Come." Both his behests were obeyed—the cockle-shell arrived speedily and also the boatman, the latter glad of the change and holiday, and highly elated by the honour of association with his own "sahib" in an enterprise so precisely to his taste—with him he brought his precious and trustworthy mussuck.[1]

Off the two adventurers started on their hazardous journey down the unknown swirling stream; Taylor in the cockle-shell, and the Attock boatman, now in it, too, now astride his inflated mussuck, clinging to the stern of the fragile craft to which he formed the living steering-apparatus. Down they were carried by the rushing stream, plump over cascades, along wild rapids, through gorges ringing with the voice of many waters, always in absolute ignorance of what the next plunge, or the next twist of the stream, might reveal—what death-dealing miniature Niagara, or what boiling pool, fanged with goring rocks. Their lives in their hands, everything depending on their nerve, coolness, and power of quick apprehension and quick decision—Taylor's ideal of life—they arrived eventually at Tangrot, soaked, breathless, and battered, but safe and sound (*per miracol mostrar*), and immensely pleased with themselves and their success.

[1] An inflated goat-skin.

Enough has been said to suggest something of the external life of the men who undertook to drive a highway across a rough and uncivilised Province; enough, also, to convey a general impression of the character and greatness of the natural forces which they were called on to bend to their wills.

A sketch, however slight, of the life of these road-makers and its *mise en scène* would be incomplete if the burly autocratic figure of John Lawrence, the Ruler of the Panjab, were entirely absent. Nor would it be quite right in colour if it ignored certain instincts and beliefs which were part of the very warp and woof of the lives of many of those gallant young workers. Embryonic, inarticulate, and quaint, sometimes, in expression, the character of these moulding ideals may be suggested in two phrases—loyalty to a race-ideal, and loyalty to a divine Master. The lives of the pioneers whose work has been described were deeply influenced by the consciousness of being Englishmen—of a certain class—in a foreign land; and this consciousness of nationality and breeding was intensified by that of religion, for they also felt that they were Christians in a pagan country. Most of them instinctively acknowledged the obligations these words imply—of this number was Alex Taylor.

The attitude of the men of whom he is representative is admirably suggested in the following description of those days of able leadership and strenuous effort, written by himself after the passage of years and experience had revealed the *leit motif* of that phase of his life—indeed—of the whole of it. "John Lawrence," he writes, "was no doubt a hard task-master. He lived under the highest pressure of work himself, and expected everyone under him to do the same. Nor was he often disappointed. He came up once a year to inspect the progress of the Grand Trunk

Road . . . it was his business, he thought, not so much to praise . . . what had been done, as to find out what might have been left undone. Still, if he were pleased with you, he took good care to let you know it. He would listen to your defence, give you a good rap if you deserved it, and take back plain speaking from you, too. He and Napier resembled one another in this—they left ample scope for individuality and independence in their subordinates. We could not help catching the spirit of work from them both."

Of the two Lawrences he says: "Henry Lawrence first won our affections, and then John gave us the spirit of order, method, and work. The two brothers managed to gather and keep a fine set of men round them—Robert Montgomery, Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, Neville Chamberlain, John Becher, Reynell Taylor, Harry Lumsden, and others—all good men, who worked with a will. There was very little jealousy, in the mean sense of the word, amongst us. But it was only natural that two such masterful beings as John Lawrence and Robert Napier, and, still more, as John Lawrence and John Nicholson—the latter was turbulent and imperious to a degree—should not get on in the same sphere. As for Henry and John Lawrence, they were both earnest spirits, each meaning right from the bottom of his heart, though neither of them would or could yield to the other."

From this glance at the contemporary history of the Province—shaken as it was by the clashing personalities and policies of strong men, each of whom was his warm personal friend, and to whose nobility and disinterested service he bears emphatic testimony—he returns to considerations at once more general and more personal. "There was a glow of work and duty round us all in the Panjab in those days," he continues, "such as I have never

felt before, or since. I well remember the reaction of feeling when I went on furlough to England—the want of pressure of any kind, the self-seeking, the dulling and dwarfing lack of high aims."

High pressure, high impersonal aims, a life glowing with work and duty—Herr von Fellenberg would have rejoiced to know that his pupil was living in precisely the moral atmosphere for which he had trained him so carefully.

CHAPTER V

THE MUTINY—FROM ATTOCK TO DELHI

(May and June, 1857)

ALEX TAYLOR spent the early months of 1857, as usual, in tents and wayside-bungalows on the stretch of road lying between Peshawar and Jhelum, for the difficulty and importance of the works connected with the Indus and its tributaries kept him chiefly in their neighbourhood.

He had bought a small house—which was his nearest approach to a home—at Pindi, his official headquarters; and he possessed a little chalet on a hill-top clearing among the firs of Murree. The latter commanded a beautiful view of distant snow-capped mountain-ranges, and had been built and occupied in earlier days by Robert Napier, who, on leaving, had bequeathed it to his subaltern. In the summer and autumn it was usually filled to overflowing with pale-faced invalids and boisterous convalescents, generally victims of the Road, to whom the cool, balmy air of the hills came with healing on its wings, and effaced the handiwork of the dust and glare, the heat and fever of the plains. When possible—when time and work permitted—Taylor added his cordial presence to the very primitive and communistic bachelor-hospitality he offered his guests; among whom, in 1857, were two young brother-officers, per-

manent members of his Road-staff—Lieutenants Hovenden[1] and Medley[2]—both of whom served with him shortly afterwards at Delhi.

These were Taylor's own houses, but not his only *pieds-à-terre*; the long length of the road was punctuated with houses in which he was a warmly welcomed guest, and with military stations in which his presence at mess was a signal for an outburst of gaiety and after-dinner sports. At Peshawar, that spring, were many old friends; chief amongst them, Herbert Edwardes, of Multan fame,[3] then Commissioner of that all-important frontier outpost, at whose house, graced by a lady of exceptional social charm,[4] he often met Neville Chamberlain,[5] with whom he had served at the end of the second Sikh War, and who then commanded the Frontier Force, and John Nicholson —Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar—with whom he had first come into contact at the siege of Ferozpur, some twelve years previously, an officer already recognised by his fellow-workers as a man fitted by genius and character to fill the highest offices in the State, and who was literally worshipped by the rough frontier-men he ruled, on whom his physical strength and beauty, his gallantry, his integrity, and his ability had made an overwhelming impression.

Characteristic is the following account of a meeting between Nicholson's devotees and Alex Taylor. "One day," writes the latter, "while I was sitting in my small bungalow at Hassan Abdal, half way between Rawalpindi and Attock, some twenty helmeted men, very quaintly dressed, filed in, one after another, and after a courteous

[1] The late Lieutenant-Colonel J. St John Hovenden, R.E. (late Bengal).

[2] The late General Julius George Medley, R.E. (late Bengal).

[3] The late Major-General Sir Herbert Edwardes, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.C.L., LL.D.

[4] The late Lady Edwardes.

[5] The late Field-Marshal Sir Neville Chamberlain, G.C.B., G.C.S.I.

salute, but without speaking a word, squatted down in a row, opposite me. I was much taken aback at this strange apparition. I looked at them, and they at me, till at last one of them gave utterance to their thoughts and objects. 'We are Nikkul Seyn's Fakirs,' he said; 'you are a white Sahib, and we are come to pay our respects to you as one of Nikkul Seyn's race.' I had never even heard of the existence of this strange sect before. After a little conversation I dismissed them, and they passed on Southward, towards Dera Ismail Khan, where the object of their adoration was then to be found. He gave them, as he always did, a good flogging for their pains, but, as in the case of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, the more he protested and the more he punished them, a great deal more they worshipped him."

Alex Taylor had friends also at Naushahra on the Kabul river, a military station to which he was sometimes called by duty, as he had charge of its boat-bridge and ferry. Among these were Mr and Mrs Graham, relatives of his kind Calcutta friend, Colonel Godfrey Greene, B.E., and destined to be more nearly connected. Many more were stationed at Hoti Mardan—some twenty miles north of Naushahra—the headquarters of the famous Guides. To three officers of this Corps was he especially attached—to Harry Lumsden—"Joe,"[1] for short—who raised the regiment, and was then at Kandahar, together with his brother Peter[2] and Dr Bellew,[3] all three ostensibly British Envoys, in reality, however, hostages in the hands of Dost Muhammad; Henry Daly,[4] who afterwards, in his Chief's absence, led the Corps on its famous march to Delhi; and, last, but

[1] The late General Sir Harry Lumsden, K.C.S.I., C.B.
[2] General Sir Peter Lumsden, G.C.B., K.C.S.I.
[3] Surgeon-General H. W. Bellew, C.S.I.
[4] The late General Sir Henry Dermot Daly, G.C.B., C.I.E.

not least, Quintin Battye, the good-looking and well-beloved, who took part in that march, only to fall, mortally wounded, ere the sun had sunk on the day of his arrival at the front.

The story of how the lad died murmuring, "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori," has often been told; but generally so incompletely as to give a false impression of its hero, who was no high-flown sentimentalist, as he is sometimes pictured, but a gay and chivalrous soldier. The Guides added a billiard-room to their mess-house in 1857. In an idle hour, young Quintin found himself alone in the big bare white-washed room; having nothing better to do, and being an excellent draughtsman, he got a piece of charcoal and set to work to adorn its walls with an impressionist sketch of a charge of the Guides Cavalry, with portraits. Under it he wrote the legend: "dulce et decorum, etc." His brother-officers were delighted with the picture, but objected to the motto as "tall." The artist, however, was stout in its defence. It was left intact, therefore, but the words became a friendly gibe, frequently levelled against him—should dull work fall to his share, he would certainly be reminded that it was "sweet and decorous."

When Henry Daly, standing beside his subaltern's death-bed on the day of their arrival at Delhi, expressed his grief, the dying lad, faintly, but with a smile, repeated the old regimental joke against himself. "Ah well," he whispered, "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori." It was the young officer's unquenchable humour which barbed the pathos, and the something more, of the noble words so gallantly realised. The incident, as it occurred, is characteristic of the modesty with which Englishmen veil their deepest feelings; had the sacred words not been associated with brotherly laughter, they would have been in Quintin Battye's heart, but not on his lips as they stiffened in death.

Throughout the spring of 1857 the life of the British officials in Northern India pursued its even, strenuous course. Alex Taylor and his subordinates coped with the forces of nature; Herbert Edwardes and John Nicholson coped with turbulent and wily tribesmen; while John Lawrence struggled with problems inherent in the administration of his great Province. The social and political conditions generally obtaining were considered normal. The troubles at Calcutta, Ambala, and in Oudh were believed to be local, and the signs of disaffection in the Sepoy Army, sporadic—mere passing symptoms of discontent, to be dealt with in the ordinary day's work.

This comfortable sense of security was wrecked by the receipt of the following unaddressed telegram both at the Army headquarters at Ambala, and at Peshawar on the night of 11th May; and on the following day by Robert Montgomery, at Lahore, and by John Lawrence at Rawalpindi. It was dated from Delhi, and ran: "The Sepoys have come in from Meerut, and are burning everything. Mr Todd[1] is dead, and we hear several Europeans. We must shut up." This message—flashed from the capital of the Mughals by a telegraph clerk at the risk of his life—saved Northern India, but came like a bolt from the blue to men who suddenly learned that they had underrated the sinister significance of much of which they had not been unaware. They realised immediately that the British Empire in India was in danger, temporarily at any rate.

What was the disaster which had occurred at Delhi? and of what sinister chain of events was it the climax? The reader may be briefly reminded of what is common knowledge.

Lord Dalhousie had left India early in 1856, but his works, good and bad, lived after him. He had greatly

[1] The head of the Telegraph Service at Delhi.

enlarged the Company's territories. He had annexed the Panjab, Pegu, and Oudh, on account of the misgovernment of their rulers; also Satara, Jhansi, and Nagpur, because of failure in the direct line of succession; and had accepted West Berar from the Nizam of Hyderabad in payment of an old and colossal debt. His term of office had been marked, also, by the extension of the material civilisation of the Peninsula: roads and canals had been made on vast scales, the steam-railway and electric telegraph had been introduced. He had, moreover, encouraged secular education and had opened many schools. Social evils, too, had come under his reforming eye: he had passed laws affecting marriage and other civil rights and customs. India, during his Governor-Generalship, had entered into a new phase of her history. This phase, however—brilliant and promising as it seemed to the energetic Occidentals who dominated the land—was looked on with extreme distrust by large sections of her native population. The Princes of India had been greatly alarmed by the new British claim to the right to annex territories because they were ill-administered, or to which heirs in the direct line had failed: the Oriental ideal of the duties of Governors differs from that of Europe, and the Eastern habit of adopting heirs had previously been respected by British rulers; now, no Maharaja or Nawab felt that his tenure of his hereditary dominions was secure.

Nor was alarm confined to the aristocrats of the Peninsula: the idea of the subjection of Indian social life to Western ideals had struck panic into many sections of her population. Uncertainty and apprehension possessed the souls of those who were loyal to the ancient transcendental philosophy which is the basis of Hindu civilisation; dismay dwelt in the hearts of the ignorant, who were blindly attached to the immemorial superstitions and usages

engendered by their religion. It was believed that the British "Raj" had embarked on a crusade against caste—the keystone of the Hindu social fabric—the extinction of which was popularly said to be the true *raison d'être* of the rest-houses (caravanserais) recently constructed along the roads; of the supply depôts, which were believed to be store-houses of caste-destructive food; and of the railways, in the carriages of which heterogeneous groups of human beings were thrust into caste-defiling proximity with each other; and so on—a long chain of false suppositions and misunderstandings, resulting from the fundamentally different conceptions of life and its aims which animate the East and West.

But were these suppositions *really* false, or only superficially so? Were not the conservative people of India right in feeling that these innovations were symptoms and outcomes of the spreading dominion of the white man's ideals, ideals incompatible with their own? Very tenacious is the continuity of racial life, and far-reaching the sway of immemorial custom. Ancient loyalties, and deeply-rooted though inarticulate instincts roused in defence of threatened sanctities, were stirring—vaguely and dimly sometimes, and sometimes with convulsive violence—in millions of hearts. The Englishman, however—who is unaware or disdainful of prejudices other than his own—ignored these things.

The growing suspicion that the English were deliberately purposed to undermine and destroy the religious and social institutions native to India was aggravated by the deliberate efforts of religious fanatics, and of the unscrupulous propagators of political disaffection with whom a conquered country is always richly provided, and whose numbers had undoubtedly been increased by Lord Dalhousie's aggressive policy. Chief among these intriguers were the Nana Sahib, the Rani of Jhansi, and the dispossessed rulers of Oudh. The

Nana was the adopted son of the ex-Peshwa of the Mahrattas, to whom the British Government had refused to continue the ex-Peshwa's yearly pension of £80,000. The childless Rani had not been allowed to select an heir to her husband's throne, or to inherit it herself; one of the very few native leaders of ability produced by India during the Mutiny, she took a bloody revenge in 1857, and died in the following year at the head of the troops she was leading against us. The King of Oudh—the Heliogabalus of Lucknow — had been deposed; the British Government allowed him £120,000 a year, and his palace near Calcutta became a hot-bed of anti-British intrigue. He was a mere puppet, however; it was with the Begum that the British Government had to reckon, for, like the Rani of Jhansi, she stood head and shoulders above her male following —"the best man of them all," so Sir James Outram called her.

All this unrest *might* have passed voiceless away with the fugitive causes which had given it birth, had it not been for discontent in the army of local mercenaries by whose aid Britain held India.

Circumstances conspired both to wound the pride of these Sepoys and to shake their confidence in their white employers. The nucleus of our Indian army had been formed of men drawn from among the Brahmans of Oudh and Bengal, men whose caste was their pride. As our territories expanded, the military peoples of the new Provinces were enlisted in our service—Muhammadan hillmen, Jats, Gurkhas, Sikhs. The Sepoys realised, not only, that in this medley of races their caste was an asset to which the English attached small importance, but that some of the representatives of the races they had helped to conquer were considered better soldiers than themselves. The Oudh-Sepoy, as the protected servant of the E. I. Com-

pany, had enjoyed special privileges in his native land. On the annexation of Oudh, however, these privileges lapsed, and the mortified soldier found himself on a judicial level with the meanest of his fellow-villagers. An order was issued at the time of the Persian War (1856), in which all soldiers were warned that they would be required to serve overseas, if necessary. This gave great offence, for to cross the "black-water" was to endanger the Sepoy's caste. It also gave him food for reflection. Could the English not hold their own out of India without his aid? They attached but little value to his caste, but who were they? With his own eyes he had seen them routed, and their armies destroyed. He remembered Kabul and Ghazni. Disquieting reports from the Crimea were discussed in the bazars. In whose strength did the white faces dominate India? He counted heads—the Sepoys in India numbered 257,000, the European soldiery only 36,000.[1] He drew his own conclusions. Why not keep India for the Indians? Why not establish a military despotism, and let the soldier fight and rule for his own benefit, and in accordance with the laws of his religion and the customs of his fathers? So thought the Sepoy.

This temper of mind fitted in admirably with the aspirations and policy of other and abler malcontents. The Sepoy's discontent was fanned. Many of the Sepoys were simple-hearted and loyal men: a cry appealing to a good and elementary instinct was needed before they could be induced to rally to the flag of mutiny. The celebrated cartridge answered this purpose. It was the spark which ignited a smouldering mass of ambitions, disappointments, and suspicions into the great conflagration which devastated India. This cartridge, which was introduced in 1856, when

[1] *Forty-one Years in India*, by Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, V.C., G.C.B., etc., 2 vols.; Richard Bentley & Son, 1897, i. p. 434.

the Enfield rifle replaced the "Brown Bess," was greased with what the mass of natives honestly believed to be a caste-destructive compound of the fat of cows and pigs—substances which were sacred to the Hindu in one case, and defiling to the Muhammadan in the other—and it is impossible to exaggerate the horror with which it was regarded: even the few Sepoys who were sceptical as to its composition dared not touch it. They knew well whether the story were true or not, it "was believed by their countrymen all over the land, and that if they used the cartridge they would become social outcasts." So the Sepoys formed themselves into societies of men, "willing to die for their religion."

Mutinies occurred early in 1857 in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, and were dealt with locally. Disquieting symptoms were common to the Panjab, and Bengal proper. Strange marks which seemed to convey secret messages appeared on tree-stems, mysterious "chupatties" circulated from village to village, unaccountable fires occurred in places where Sepoys were quartered, and, most significant of all, the native army, as a whole, refused to use the greased cartridge. In spite of these ominous warnings, the foreign rulers of India—soldiers and statesmen alike—took no steps to meet the crisis which was obviously at hand.

Meanwhile the general dismay and ferment caused by the introduction of the suspected cartridge ripened into a deep-laid plot, the outline of which is thus briefly indicated by Mr John Cracroft Wilson—Judge of Moradabad in 1857—who had exceptional opportunities for obtaining first-hand information concerning it. "Carefully collating oral information with facts as they occurred," he writes, "I am convinced that Sunday, 31st May 1857, was the day fixed for the mutiny to commence *throughout* the Bengal Army; that there were committees of about three members in each

regiment which conducted the duties, if I may so speak, of the mutiny; that the Sepoys, as a body, knew nothing of the plans arranged; and that the only compact entered into by regiments as bodies was that their particular regiment would do as the other regiments did. The committee conducted the correspondence, and arranged the plan of operations. They decided that, on the 31st May, parties should be told off to murder all European functionaries (most of whom would be engaged at Church), seize the treasure (which would then be augmented by the first instalment of the rubbee harvest), and release the prisoners, of whom an army existed (in the North-Western Provinces alone, upwards of 25,000 men). The regiments in Delhi and its immediate vicinity were instructed to seize the magazine and fortifications; but, the massacre being complete and thoroughly carried out, and all opposition being thus rendered impossible, it was arranged that all other brigades and outposts should remain at their respective stations."

This disaster was averted by the hasty action of certain regiments, who mutinied under the pressure of passions and events *before* the prescribed date, and thus gave the English time to forestall the intentions of the other mutineers and to organise their own reprisals.

Before recalling the actual features of this premature outbreak, which occurred on the 10th of May at Meerut, it would perhaps be well to recall the relation of Meerut to Delhi in the political and military organisation of Northern India.

It will be remembered that little more than half a century previously, Lord Lake, acting in conjunction with Lord Wellesley in the Deccan, had defeated the Mahratta force led by the French general Bourquin, and had captured Delhi in 1803. On the annexation of the capital of the Mughals

by the E. I. Company, it would have been wise to have removed the puppet-Emperor—Shah Alam—from a city in which the great traditions of his family lent him a prestige which might prove as dangerous as it was misleading. Lord Lake, however—moved with compassion for a blind and poverty-stricken old man who clung to the seat of his forefathers—gave him an allowance of £10,000 a month, together with Shah Jahan's Palace—a magnificent building, a mile in circumference—which was pronounced *extra territorial.* Safe in this political sanctuary from assassination or supersession, successive Mughal rulers and their families gave free rein to the caprices and vices of Oriental despots.

Other equally impolitic concessions were added to this piece of unstatesmanly generosity. A right to all the symbols of homage with which an Eastern Sovereign is usually approached was conceded to this titular Monarch, and were exacted even of the British Representative at his Court. The Company's pensioner was also allowed to stamp with his own superscription the coinage of the whole realm once governed by his ancestors, for it was thought that, as the substance of power was in our hands, it would be chivalrous to allow the vanquished to play with its shadows ; it was, moreover, held that the Company would gain, politically, if it were popularly considered the agent and heir of the Mughals. The actual result of these measures, however, was that the Mughals continued to look on themselves as Potentates ; that their coinage kept the idea of their suzerainty alive throughout the length and breadth of Hindustan ; and that, while the British Commissioner and his subordinates at Delhi were toiling to establish law and order in the city, its heart was poisoned by the Palace—an inviolable sink of Eastern corruption, protected and maintained by the British Government.

Nor did British sentimentality end there.

Delhi and the Delhi district were governed by a so-called "Resident and Chief Commissioner"; that is to say, by an officer who was the British Representative at the Court of the Great Mughal, and who also administered an area of some eight hundred square miles—of which Delhi was the political centre—and supported a population of 500,000 souls. The men of mark who filled this difficult and dangerous post were not supported, as were their confrères at Peshawar, by a large body of European troops, because it was thought that the presence of armed white men in the city might wound the delicate sensibilities of the phantom Monarch in the Palace. In 1857, therefore, Delhi, which had been rendered almost impregnable by Robert Napier, and contained the powder-magazine and arsenal destined to supply Northern India, *was garrisoned by Sepoys only*. The dangers attendant on such an arrangement were pointed out by Resident after Resident. They were met by massing a strong body of troops, well provided with artillery, at Meerut, only forty-two miles from Delhi; within *striking* distance, therefore, should such action become necessary.

This policy of "delicatezza" found no favour with Lord Dalhousie; he convinced the Directors of the Company that it was the height of folly to leave the Palace—the citadel of a highly fortified turbulent town—in the hands of its dispossessed royalties. Lord Canning was directed to tell Bahadur Shah, the then Mughal, that on his death —and he was an old man—his family would have to leave Delhi, and that the Government would then recognise his eldest son as his successor to everything except the royal title. This announcement was exceedingly distasteful to the King's youngest wife, Zinat Mahál, who wished her own boy to succeed to his father's honours as well as to his pension; she became a centre of anti-British intrigues in

Delhi, in the Muhammadan courts of the Peninsula, and even in that of Persia, with whom we were then at war.

This outburst of disaffection in the Palace synchronised with the acute discontent in the Sepoy Army produced by the introduction of the new cartridge. It would have been a miracle if these two currents of disaffection had not coalesced—the chief civil and military authorities in Delhi and Meerut, however, lapped in culpable ignorance, took no precautions.

In May, 1857, two splendid British regiments—the 60th Rifles and the 6th Dragoon Guards—were quartered at Meerut; together with a troop of Horse Artillery, a Company of Foot Artillery, and a Light Field Battery. Of native regiments there were only three — two of Infantry, and one of Cavalry. This large body of men—chiefly European—in this critical post, at this critical time, was commanded by a General Hewitt, an officer of notorious inefficiency—old, obese, and sluggish. He had commanded the troops in the all-important frontier station of Peshawar for three years, and this in spite of the vigorous protests of the civil authorities; while there he never visited his out-posts, and, being too unwieldy to ride, made a practice of reviewing his troops from the seat of a buggy.

Throughout the spring, open discontent had reigned in the ranks of the Sepoy regiments at Meerut. On Friday, 8th May, a parade of the 3rd Native Cavalry was held in order to explain a slight concession made with regard to the use of the unfortunate cartridge. Ninety of the smartest men in the Corps were called out; eighty-five of them refused to accept cartridges from the hands of their officers, not because they—personally—believed them to be defiling, but because, in the then state of native public opinion, they would have become outcasts had they received them. Next day, these men, some of whom had done distinguished

service, were stripped of their necklaces, medals, and other honours in the presence of their comrades; fetters were slowly riveted on their ankles by the regimental blacksmith; they were then marched off to gaol, having been condemned by Court Martial to ten years' imprisonment with hard labour on the roads. As they left the ground a cry for justice burst from their lips. Their comrades went back to their lines, their hearts either aflame with indignation, or black with panic. Native rumour said that the English had determined to manacle and imprison all the Sepoys whose caste they could not destroy, and, if they resisted, to open on them with Artillery, which at Meerut was in the hands of British soldiers exclusively; that morning's work was accepted as the opening move in this campaign against caste. The Sepoys talked things over—emissaries from Delhi to fan the flames were doubtless not wanting—and agreed that it was necessary to act at once.

Next day—the 10th May, a long hot Sunday—was wearing to its close, a Church-bell was tolling the Christians to evening service, when cries and shouts were heard, and columns of smoke were seen to rise into the clear, still air. The Sepoys were shooting their officers, firing their lines, freeing their comrades; and not their comrades only, but also the thousand ruffians—robbers and murderers—incarcerated in the same gaol. The latter—reinforced by the cut-throats of the countryside, and by the hooligans of the Meerut bazars—armed with knives and sticks, and mad with blood-lust and greed of loot, swarmed into the cantonment—evidently the Sepoys' intentions were known in the city—and soon every bungalow was aflame. The night resounded with the cries of women and children in the grip of ruffians, the screams of horses imprisoned in burning stables, the yells of plunderers, the crackling of flames, the sound of firing, and the shouts and bugling of

the mutineers as they escaped from their blazing lines, and, spurred by fear of the terrible reprisals they never doubted would follow, fled towards Delhi. They need not have feared ; they were not pursued.

Although the desire to bring the growing disaffection in the Sepoy ranks to a head is the only explanation of the impolitic harshness with which the representatives of the 3rd Native Cavalry were treated, no steps had been taken to check the outbreak which was its almost inevitable result. The Mutiny found the General utterly unprepared. The British regiments were not marched on to the field until the European station and most of its inhabitants had perished, and the mutineers were well on their way to Delhi. Even then, General Hewitt, instead of slipping his British regiments—which were straining like hounds on a leash—on to the fugitives, ordered his troops to defend their barracks and the gutted bungalows in the station.[1] Against whom ? —not the Sepoys, they had long since vanished ; but against a mob of gaol-birds and ill-armed bazar-hooligans. Two British regiments with artillery !

General Hewitt's conception of his duty seems to have been confined to the protection of his own station, the safety of which—in comparison with that of Delhi—was a negligible quantity. He actually allowed his three regiments of mutineers to escape unmolested and unpursued into the Muhammadan capital, with its Court and Palace, its inadequately defended powder-magazine, and its disaffected Sepoy garrison ; there to stir smouldering race-antagonisms, smouldering religious fanaticisms, and smouldering political ambitions, into a flame which set Northern

[1] "Had a wing of the 60th Rifles, supported by a squadron of the 6th Dragoons, and some guns, been sent in immediate pursuit, Sir Patrick Grant feels persuaded that the insurrection would have been nipped in the bud and the atrocities which have been since perpetrated altogether averted."—Sir G. Forrest, *State Papers*, vol. i. (Delhi), p. 259.

India and Bengal ablaze. His inaction resulted in the siege of Delhi, and in all that meant misery to its wretched inhabitants, and loss of British lives; in the massacres and bloodshed in Northern India, Oudh, and Bengal; in the death of men like Nicholson and Henry Lawrence; and in the destruction of an army of 150,000 Bengal Sepoys.

Meanwhile the mutineers, mad with fanaticism and panic, fled down the white moonlit road which led from the flaming bungalows in their rear to the great populous city, in the heart of which they might lie *perdus* throughout the day of reckoning which they knew must dawn.

It was still early morning on the 11th May when the Native Cavalry crossed into the city by the bridge of boats, terrorised the bazars, freed the cut-throats in the gaols, and, reinforced, presently, by the Infantry from Meerut, by the scum and dregs of the streets, and by the troops on guard at the Palace and city gates, re-commenced their work of murder and arson. Troops from the cantonments outside were marched into the city; they fraternised with the insurgents and shot their officers. The Commandant of the Palace Guards, and a group of English civilians and ladies were massacred. The Palace was invaded by the mutineers, who bivouacked, shouting for food and money, in the royal courts. Anarchy reigned. Houses and shops were closed; their wretched owners sat within, quaking with fear. The people prayed that the English troops from Meerut might arrive soon and put down the rising.[1]

[1] "If earlier steps had been taken to rouse the native magnates," writes a native gentleman attached to the Court, "many lives might have been saved . . . the personal retainers of the nobles might have dealt with the handful of marauders; but, alas, the sudden inroad created a panic. . . . Ignorance of the strength of the mutineers paralysed the better disposed of the inhabitants. By nine o'clock . . . the principal executive officers of the Government were dead. Every man thought of his own safety, and that of his family and property."—*Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi.* Translated by C. T. Metcalfe, C.S.I.: Constable, Westminster, 1898, p. 47.

All was not lost, however. Loyal natives put little groups of Europeans into hiding, hoping to keep them in safety until the arrival of the avenging troops from Meerut. The cantonments were so far untouched. The main-guard of the Kashmir Gate was still in British possession, though the loyalty of the Sepoys manning it was doubtful; it was crowded by refugees, men and women from all parts of the city.

A group of nine determined Englishmen also held the magazine. They hoped to hold it till the troops from Meerut arrived; but, in case this should prove impossible, they laid a train to the powder-magazine and stood to their guns. Message after message came from the King bidding them give it up. Presently the enemy arrived in thousands, armed, and carrying scaling ladders; the native garrison deserted; the nine, however, replied to the murderous musketry of their assailants with a stream of grape. So unequal a contest, however, could not be long maintained. Oh, for the clattering hoofs of the Meerut Dragoon Guards, with Horse Artillery in their rear!

Meanwhile, a group of Europeans—chiefly women—abundantly provided with arms, collected on and about the Flag-staff Tower which overlooked the cantonments from the Ridge. Anxiously they scanned the Meerut road for the cloud of dust which never rose. The afternoon shadows were lengthening, when they saw a thin column of smoke rise between them and Salimgarh; then came a shattering explosion, and a dense chocolate-coloured pall rolled over the city. The heroic nine had effected their purpose; they had blown up the powder-magazine.

The shadows lengthened. Slowly and gradually the fear of reprisals from Meerut died out of the hearts of mutineers and rebels. Shortly after the explosion, the Sepoys at the Kashmir Gate fired on their officers and on the refugees with whom the main-guard was crowded. Many fell; the

survivors, women as well as men, leapt through an embrasure into a ditch some thirty feet below, and some succeeded in making their way into the shelter of the orange groves of the Kudsia Bagh.

The Sepoys in the cantonments also felt that the day of the white face was over, and implored their officers to effect their escape while there was yet time. Getting into carriages and carts, the wretched remnants of the English women and men, who had awakened that morning unsuspicious of disaster, drove out into the robber-haunted, inimical country-side, thankful to escape with bare life. As they disappeared into the darkness they heard shouts and firing in the smoke-enwrapped city, the din and outcry of approaching multitudes athirst for blood and plunder, and saw bungalows burning, first in Sabzi Mandi and then in their own cantonments.

Throughout that day the old Emperor had been the sport of circumstances; in the morning he had made feeble but sincere attempts to save the English in the Palace Main-Guard; before noon, however, they had been killed. Long before nightfall—both he and the Palace being in the power of the mutineers and it being clear that no avengers were approaching from Meerut—the old man, yielding to superior force, put himself at the head of the rebels, civil and military. His adhesion to the Sepoy cause gave the struggle a new complexion—at first a mutiny, it had become a rebellion.

Five days later the European refugees in the Palace—men, women, and children—were butchered under circumstances of blood-curdling brutality in which some of the Princes of the blood are said to have been involved. "The whole dark truth of what took place can never be told."[1]

[1] Sir G. Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, 3 vols., Blackwood & Son, 1904–12, vol. i. p. 50.

"The evil caused by General Hewitt's incompetence, and the delay in marching to Delhi, will be felt for the next fifty years"; this was John Lawrence's comment.

Delhi was lost.

The position in India was undeniably sinister. Whereas, as has been seen, the Sepoy army was 257,000 strong, well trained, and fighting, surrounded by compatriots, in its native land, the British army numbered 36,000 men only—an exceptionally small figure; for, in spite of Lord Dalhousie's protests, white troops had been withdrawn from India for service in the recent wars in Burma, the Crimea, Persia, and China.

Nor was the aspect of things in the Panjab exhilarating. The Sepoy regiments imported into the Province numbered 36,000 men, but the British troops 10,000 only. To this army John Lawrence's large local levies must be added—15,000 Military Police (mounted and foot) and 13,000 Irregulars, the latter chiefly used to keep their ancestral enemies, the Frontier tribes, in check.

There could be no doubt that the 36,000 Sepoys, whom we had brought into the country to act as our mailed fist, would turn against us at the first opportunity. What reliance could be placed in the loyalty of our 28,000 local Irregulars and Police to their enemies of yesterday? Would the Panjabis side with the men of their own colour who had been imported to assist us—their conquerors—to enforce our will, or, would they throw in their lots with us? To expect them to side with us was as if Actæon had expected the wild things of the woods to come to his aid when his hounds turned against him; yet, if they did not, our game was up, for the country would certainly follow the flower of its manhood, and it would be impossible for a small group of civilians, backed by 10,000 armed

British soldiers, to cope with 64,000 armed enemies in a hostile country, behind whom lay a ring of predatory hillmen (Waziris, Afridis, Yusafzais, Mohmands, the men of Kashmir, Jammu, Kangra, etc.), ready to pour down from their mountain fastnesses and flood the plains, should the breakwater—our Frontier Force—which held them back, give way. Nor was this all: behind these hillmen lay the wild passes and snow-capped mountains of Afghanistan, ruled by Dost Muhammad, with whom we had just signed a defensive Treaty, but whom we had once unjustly dethroned, and to whom we had restored his kingdom only when we were not strong enough to do otherwise. Behind Afghanistan, again, lay Persia, and the wilds of Central Asia, whence hordes invading India had frequently poured; and beyond them, again, loomed the great spectre—Russia.

To the South lay the Cis-Sutlej States belonging to the protected Sikh Rajas of Patiala, Jind, and Nabha, in whose hands it lay to close or open the road to Delhi; would *they* be loyal? Further South and West rose Delhi itself, which, unless speedily recaptured, might send streams of belligerents Northward.

Clearly the sky—beneath which John Lawrence was set to steer a fragile bark—was black with menace. The clouds which fed the breaking storm were impelled by winds blowing from all quarters at once.

That no reliance could be placed on the loyalty of the Native Regulars, was evident. That the struggle between them and us, if they mutinied, must be to the death, or—on the part of the Sepoys—unconditional surrender, was obvious. To the question, how they were to be treated before they committed themselves, there was but one answer —"Disarm them at once." It is not easy, however, for 10,000 men to disarm 36,000.

The case of the Panjab Irregulars was different: they would remain on our side, if properly handled—so thought John Lawrence. What hold had he on them? The mutinous Sepoy of Bengal had made Delhi his head-quarters, and, Hindu though he generally was, had put the Muhammadan Great Mughal forward as his figure-head. The Muhammadan was the hereditary foe of the Sikh, and the Mughals of Delhi were the arch-persecutors and murderers of Sikh Gurus, one of whom had foretold the capture of Delhi by the white man.[1] John Lawrence knew that the heart of the Sikh nation would be stirred to its depths by a voice crying on the Panjabis to arise, avenge their Gurus, and sack Delhi under the leadership and *ikbal* of the great "John Company." He was well aware, moreover, that this cry must be raised quickly, and must fill all men's ears to the exclusion of that other cry which would assuredly also rise—"Down with the cruel Faringhi!" He saw his way to managing the Sikhs. How about the Muhammadans? The enemy proposed to them must not be the Muhammadan Mughal, but the effeminate and treacherous Hindu of the Lower Ganges, for whom their contempt was perennial, who had eaten our salt and had nevertheless turned against us, and whose destruction would give the Panjab the looting of Delhi. *Divide et impera.*

A purer source of power lay in the personal ascendancy of the picked officers who administered the Panjab and led its troops. Both the Sikh and the wild Muhammadan of the frontier are loyal where they give their hearts; the men of the Guides and of other leading Panjab Irregular Corps would follow their trusted white leaders to the death. To

[1] The ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664–1675), executed by Aurungzeb because he refused to embrace Islam. "I look Westward towards the Europeans who are coming from beyond the Seas, to destroy thy Empire." "God and the Guru," was the war-cry of the Sikhs during the assault on Delhi.

this personal relation must be added the general respect and liking which the people of the Panjab—and more especially the working classes—felt towards their white rulers, after eight years of just and beneficent government.

These were the assets in the strength of which John Lawrence hoped to weather the storm. His policy was obviously to lose no time in pitting the Sikh against his ancestral foe, the Musalman, and the fierce Muhammadan of the Panjab against the Brahman of Oudh and Bengal; *i.e.* in launching both Sikh and Muhammadan against Delhi and our Bengal Sepoys. Before this could be done, however, it was necessary to disarm the doubtful Sepoy regiments in the Panjab, and more especially the large bodies of Native Regulars at Lahore and Peshawar.

This was done most skilfully by Robert Montgomery and Brigadier Stuart Corbett at Lahore, where there were 3500 Sepoys, but only 500 British soldiers with artillery. The critical telegram reached the civilian on the eve of a ball given by the cantonment in honour of the officers of the H.M. 81st, the only European regiment in the cantonment. At dawn these officers passed straight from the ball-room to the parade ground, on to which three Sepoy regiments of Foot and one of Cavalry—all unsuspecting of what was to follow—were also marched; a skilful manœuvre brought the native troops face to face with Artillery which had been brought on to the ground overnight, and which was masked by Englishmen; the latter fell back; the order was given—"Pile arms"; there was a moment's hesitation; the hollow throats of the cannon spoke eloquently, however, some 3000 muskets and 500 sabres rattled to the ground; "Quick march," and the Sepoys wheeled off the ground. Less than 500 well-handled Englishmen, backed by guns, had disarmed a Corps outnumbering them in the ratio of seven to one, and backed by Ranjit Singh's turbulent capital

with its population of 100,000 souls. This was done without shedding a drop of blood. A similar scene on a smaller scale was shortly enacted in the citadel overlooking Lahore.

Thirty miles from Lahore stands the Holy of Holies of the Sikhs — the Golden Temple of Amritsar — its delicate and glittering loveliness mirrored in the quiet waters of the marble-edged "pool of immortality," from the centre of which it rises. Encircling and guarding this Khalsa sanctuary—the goal of many a pilgrimage—lies the Holy City, through the dusty streets of which stately white bulls with gilt horns still wander at will. Its fierce population was swayed by two fanaticisms, that of race and that of religion. Guarding the city rises the fort of Govindgarh, then occupied by a native garrison only. No sooner was the parade of disarmament over at Lahore than several Companies of British soldiers found themselves jolting along the dusty road to Amritsar in little two-wheeled country-carts (ekkas), which had been collected overnight for the purpose, and shortly after nightfall British troops occupied the fort of Govindgarh. Robert Montgomery also sent warning expresses to Ferozpur, the arsenal of the Panjab, and to the famous citadels of the South-West and North-East—Multan and Kangra—together with letters of warning and direction to the officers in charge of the isolated civil stations scattered over the Province, letters of which the gist was "Show no alarm, keep cool, collect information, and act vigorously."

Thanks to his energetic action, not only was a massacre at Lahore averted, but, probably, a general rising of the Panjab, for, had the capital of the Sikhs fallen at the outset into the hands of the Bengal soldiery, the ensuing struggle would assuredly not have been confined to the English and their mutinous Hindustani following, but—as at Delhi—would have become political in character: the whole Panjab

would have blazed into a war of *national* independence. John Lawrence was a taciturn man, and, chary of praise, he expected his subordinates to do their duty; but on this occasion he expressed himself—"You Lahore men have done nobly," he wrote privately to Robert Montgomery; . . . "all of you . . . pucca (real) trumps"; and in his official report—"all officers, civil and military, are displaying that calmness and energy which, under the circumstances, might be expected from English gentlemen, and are a sufficient guarantee that all that is practicable will be effected by them."

Peshawar was the one other place in the Panjab in which weakness or procrastination on the part of its white rulers would have spelt *imperial* disaster. The result of a false step there would have been a rising of the frontier hill tribes, followed, probably, by a jihad (holy war), and, not impossibly, by an Afghan invasion, for the idea of recovering Peshawar obsessed Dost Muhammad like a passion, and his Afghan horsemen, whom we had hunted from Gujarat to the Khyber, were burning for revenge. England's difficulty was everyone's opportunity, and it behoved her representatives to hold their heads high and go warily.

At that moment the valley of Peshawar enjoyed a precarious peace, safeguarded by men who stood armed and at attention. The city contained a population of 60,000 inhabitants of far-famed rascality. Six of the great tribes in its immediate neighbourhood were under a ban, either because they had murdered our representatives, or because of gross and unpunished cases of armed brigandage. The government of the city and of a countryside populated by cut-throats was in the hands of a Commissioner and a Deputy Commissioner, supported by 2000 European soldiers, 8000 Sepoys, eighteen guns, and a field Battery. This proportion of British soldiers to Sepoys was unusually

high—as previously indicated,—both because of the strategical importance of the post, and because, for obvious reasons, the use of local levies would have been impolitic.

The telegram from Delhi, received on the night of the 11th, was followed by another from Meerut, dispatched at midnight on Sunday, *i.e. after* the mutiny had taken place; it ran—"Native troops in open mutiny. European troops under arms defending barracks." This statement of the monstrous conditions obtaining at Meerut was received with indignation, but not with surprise, for General Hewitt was known at Peshawar. Fortunately those in authority at this critical station were men of very different calibre—Herbert Edwardes was the Commissioner, and John Nicholson, Deputy Commissioner; Brigadier Sydney Cotton commanded the Peshawar Brigade, and to Neville Chamberlain was entrusted the Frontier Force. These four men met immediately, sketched out a mutiny-policy, and decided—with John Lawrence's concurrence—(*a*) to form a strong Movable Column of reliable troops—European and Irregulars—destined to take the field at once, and, under the command of Neville Chamberlain, to march on the first station that stirred, and bring the matter without delay to the decision of the bayonet;[1] (*b*) to raise a body of 1000 Multani Horse,[2] to act with this Column; (*c*) to dispatch the most disaffected Sepoy Corps to distant frontier posts, where, isolated and surrounded by savage foes, they would have but little scope for the exercise of their mutinous proclivities.

Time went on; the sky darkened from hour to hour.

News of the unpunished massacres at Meerut and Delhi reached the bazars through native sources. British prestige was shaken. The demeanour of the native troops, which

[1] "This disaffection," said Herbert Edwardes, "will never be talked down; it must be put down."

[2] This Multani corps was afterwards raised to 2000 Horse and 1000 Foot.

had been conciliatory, changed. Their hostile intentions were exposed by their correspondence, which had been seized. Nicholson attempted to raise levies, but could get no volunteers. An astute native nobleman said openly: "This is a crisis in which you white men must help yourselves."

Edwardes, who had been summoned by John Lawrence to a Council of War at Pindi, rode eighty miles back to Peshawar in the dreadful heat on the 20th. Being sure that a crisis was at hand, he and Nicholson lay down in their clothes that night. At midnight they heard that a detachment of a Sepoy regiment at Naushahra—the 55th Native Infantry, in the loyalty of which they had both believed—had mutinied, looted the regimental magazine, and was marching Northward to rejoin its main body at Mardan, after having been checked at the river by Lieutenant Alex Taylor, under circumstances which will be described later. On receipt of this intelligence, Herbert Edwardes and Nicholson got up, went out into the hot, silent night to awaken General Cotton—secrecy was important. It being decided that four out of the seven Sepoy regiments in the station should be disarmed, their Colonels were summoned. A stormy meeting was held. The officers commanding the doomed regiments professed implicit confidence in their men, and protested violently against the proposed action. Night wore to dawn. At 6 a.m. General Cotton issued a definite order: the parade of disarmament was to be held at 7. This was a critical and difficult business. Would the doomed regiments submit without a struggle? Would the three respited regiments passively countenance the cutting of their brethren's claws? or would they throw in their lot with that of their compatriots, and thus provoke a massacre? All went well, however; the British troops and artillery were well placed, the disaffected regiments had no suspicion of

what was about to occur, and, eventually, seeing that they were commanded by the European Force and the guns, laid down their arms when ordered to do so. Some of the British officers of the Cavalry regiment who believed in their men, tore off their spurs indignantly and threw their own swords on to the pile of their men's sabres—after-events proved that their faith was misplaced.

The effect produced by this daring policy was striking. No sooner was the parade over than the neighbouring Khans and Chiefs who had held back the day before, crowded round Edwardes—"as thick as flies"—and were profuse in their offers of service. British prestige had been re-established. A punitive force was then dispatched against the mutinous 55th, at Hoti Mardan. The Corps was annihilated; its Colonel, who had loved and trusted his men, committed suicide.

But, although the measures taken at Peshawar had been successful so far, the position there was still most critical. The mutinous Sepoys had been disarmed, it is true, and that without shedding a drop of blood; the garrison, however, was the weaker by 4000 men. The malcontents, moreover, had to be *watched*, a task which could be trusted to the European soldiery only. The latter, in fact, were the only troops in whom absolute reliance could be placed. Everything critical had to be done by them. They were "bucketed about," were marched here, and marched there, and, however dog-tired, were obliged to be always *en évidence*. Great efforts were made to husband their strength; when possible, they were carried about on elephants and in carts, but they felt the overwhelming heat greatly and were getting "used up." The state of the countryside, too, gave grave cause for anxiety. The proclamation of a holy war would have weighted the scales against us disastrously, and this declaration was imminent. Herbert Edwardes wrote to

John Lawrence to ask for reinforcements—"You know on what a nest of devils we stand," he said; "if we once take our foot up we shall be stung to death." It was impossible to send them.

The necessity of relieving the Europeans of part of the weight under which they were sinking, and of averting a war in which the Crescent would be opposed to the Cross, was met by the authorities at Peshawar with a two-edged expedient—the raising of local levies. The prize Herbert Edwardes held out to the volunteers he enrolled was Delhi and its fabulous loot, and it was one precisely to the taste of turbulent hillmen who had lived for generations by raiding the plains. They enlisted in great numbers. Afridis, Multani-Pathans, brigands, outlaws, men under ban, who had harried the frontier for years, came in, were forgiven and provided with a market for their swords. "This stroke of policy is wisdom itself," cried the old Shahzada Jumhaur, throwing his turban at Sir Herbert Edwardes' feet. "See, if these men kill the enemy, well; if the enemy kills them, better! In either case the peace of the frontier is secured." And thus the crisis in Peshawar resulting from the outbreak at Meerut actually redounded to our advantage—the conquerors and the conquered found themselves in the same boat and this to their mutual advantage, an experience which drew them together as nothing else would have done.

These were successes; failures, however, were not wanting. One, which might have had disastrous consequences, was the fiasco at Jullundur, where there were three armed and disaffected Sepoy regiments, known to be watching their opportunity, but also a strong British regiment with artillery. The General, however, allowed himself to be surprised—and this in spite of repeated warnings from John Lawrence—then, instead of striking, stood on the defensive;

and finally, having allowed three regiments to give him the slip, made so feeble an attempt at pursuit that the mutineers succeeded in picking up a fourth regiment at Phillaur, in crossing the river, and in making their way to Delhi, where they arrived 3000 strong, a little before the appearance of the Rohilkhand Brigade, which in its turn had marched 4000 strong, unmolested, within striking distance of General Hewitt, who was still at Meerut. Well might John Lawrence —who was painfully raising reinforcements in the Panjab, in tens and hundreds—cry, "Some of these Commanders are worse enemies than the mutineers themselves. I could sometimes almost believe they are given us for our destruction."

The geographical position of Jullundur lent its mutineers sinister importance. The fort of Ludhiana—not Delhi—was their original goal; for this stronghold was not only provided with artillery, arms, and 1000 barrels of gunpowder, but it commanded the two highways to Delhi: the road from the arsenal of Ferozpur, and the road from the arsenal of Phillaur. The *sine quâ non* of the existence of the British force before Delhi was the command of its communications with its base, the Panjab; Ludhiana in the hands of the mutineers, meant the forfeiture of this command. That this disaster did not occur was largely due to a happy accident. The mutineers emptied their regimental magazines before leaving Jullundur, but, instead of ball-cartridges, filled their carts with *blank* ammunition; of this, however, they were not aware until checked at the ford near Phillaur by George Ricketts, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana.

This young civilian—who had heard of the outbreak at Jullundur and knew that, *coûte que coûte*, Ludhiana must be kept in British hands—marched with a friend, a handful of Sikhs, and some old guns belonging to the Raja of Nabha, to meet the four mutinous regiments at the passage of the Sutlej, thinking that, if he could check their career, the

British troops, whom he naturally imagined to be in hot pursuit, would attack them in the rear; but incredible to relate, the General had confined his European soldiery to the station.

It was ten o'clock at night and very dark when George Ricketts got into touch with the Jullundur Sepoys. The banks of the river were rough and ill-suited for artillery; the frightened horses ran away with one of his guns, carrying it into the midst of the enemy; the *one* Englishman with him was wounded; and some of his Sikhs deserted. Nothing daunted, however, and supported by such of his men as were faithful, he kept his ground, serving his gun himself, and for some time held up a number of the mutineers, who, after firing a few rounds, were silent, and to his surprise, marched on—not to Ludhiana as he expected—but towards Delhi. Presently his ammunition ran short; he then fell back in good order, having not only disputed and checked the passage of four regiments, but having *disarmed* all those who fired on him—though of this he was ignorant at the time. Had the Raja of Patiala only known that the great body of Sepoys who were marching across his country were without ammunition, he would have shot them down like dogs, and earned immense "kudos"; he was ignorant of the fact, however, and by dint of marching rapidly and without straggling they succeeded in reaching Delhi. John Lawrence was delighted when he heard of Ricketts' audacious feat, and of the amazing success with which it had been attended—for the helpless condition of the mutineers did not transpire till later—and congratulated him on having maintained the honour of their common cloth. Indeed, V.C.s have been given for less.

Two phases of duty lay before John Lawrence—as Administrator of the Panjab he was responsible for its well-

being; his Province, however, was a *part* merely of our Indian Dominions; its preservation was secondary to the maintenance of our Empire. He rose immediately to the height of the position, and strained every nerve, not only to bring his own ship safe into port, but to make that ship the saviour of the fleet. Gifted with a historian's knowledge, a soldier's heart, and a statesman's instincts, he realised at once that Delhi would be the centre of the coming struggle. No one subsists by the light of logic, and no one less than the deeply-religious Oriental, who lives in conscious dependence on unseen powers, and whose life is moulded by omens, dreams, talismans, and by the ideas of destiny and of the occult potency of things and places. Delhi, the capital of the Mughals, held a unique place in the popular imagination. It had been the capital of India for more than seven centuries. Three times had the fate of the Peninsula been decided outside her walls. Her Monarchs, and her Monarchs only, had ruled from sea to sea, and from the mountain-ranges of the North to the Southern Ocean. She was the seat of conquerors. The Power on *her* throne only was supreme in India. The white men had been that Power, but they had been dispossessed by their own servants; their sun had set—thus the natives of India would feel and reason, he knew, when they heard that the capital of the Mughals was in native hands. This fatalism, however, was double-edged: the white man had only to resume the throne of Delhi, and it would be a weapon in his hands. It was essential to success, however, that this should be done quickly, before India, as a whole, had lost its faith in the European's *ikbal*.

In John Lawrence's opinion the mutiny of all the Sepoys of Bengal was a foregone conclusion. Delhi, highly fortified, abundantly supplied with water, and in their hands, would be the centre to which he was convinced

the mutineers of Oudh, Gwalior, Jhansi, Bundelkhand, the North-West Provinces, and the Panjab would naturally flock. A day after the first outbreak it was in the possession of seven mutinous regiments ; it must be re-captured, so he felt, before that number was seven times seven, and before the prestige of its possession had dissolved the loyalty of our Indian *civil* subjects.

He wrote in this sense to Lord Canning, to Mr Mangles the Director of the E. I. Company, to the Governors of the various Indian Provinces, and, above all, to General Anson, the Commander-in-Chief, then at Simla, on whom he urged an immediate move with Delhi as its objective, in the most weighty words he could find. Nor did his convictions find vent in words only. He realised that the forces at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief were wholly inadequate to the occasion ; that it would be as much as the rulers of Lower Bengal could do to save their own Province ; and that, consequently, the recapture of Delhi, if it could be achieved, must, in the nature of things, be the work of the Panjab. To the realisation of this end he bent all his powers of will and intelligence, and devoted all the material resources at his command, eventually making his Province —*outside of which Delhi lay*—the base from which the besieging army drew the men, the siege-materials, and the money which made the siege and ultimate success possible.

The political tension in the Panjab was great. British prestige, however, stood high ; memories of the Sikh Wars were fresh in many minds. The rulers of the Province had proved themselves men of power. The Sikh Cis-Sutlej Chiefs, Patiala, Jind, and Nabha, were unwavering in their loyalty—that is to say, in their belief that the British Raj would emerge victorious from the struggle. They were watching events closely, however ; none of them wished to be on the losing side, but, as against their ancestral

enemies, the Muhammadans, their sympathies were with us. Thus the crisis in the Province narrowed itself down to a trial of strength between the two foreign armies within its boundaries—the Europeans 10,000 strong, and the Sepoys 36,000. The heart of both these armies, however, was not in the Panjab, but at Delhi, where the real struggle for Empire would take place—a racial struggle.

The size of the Province—added to the overwhelming numbers of the Sepoys—fought on the side of the mutineers. They had been disarmed at Peshawar and Lahore—nominally only, as after events proved[1]—but their disarmament had not freed all the British troops in those stations, for it was necessary that they should be watched, and that, by the men so sorely needed at Delhi. Other Sepoy Corps, large or small, as circumstances had dictated, were scattered in posts of strategic importance throughout the country. The more admirable the distribution of the pieces, the more disastrous its disorganisation. The loss of a single station was not only a misfortune, *per se*, but might result in the dislocation of a strategic system.[2] If, for instance, Pindi on the Grand Trunk Road were lost, Peshawar would be in the air—cut off from its base. Attock, Jhelum, Wazirabad, Ferozpur, and Phillaur, commanded fords, or boat-bridges; if they were lost, the troops destined to reinforce the Field Force at Delhi would be "held up." Ferozpur and Phillaur contained the arsenals

[1] On 30th July one of the disarmed regiments at Lahore (the 26th Native Infantry), having provided itself with knives and axes, rose, hacked its commanding officer to pieces, succeeded in effecting its escape, but was pursued and utterly annihilated. On 14th August the men of the 10th Cavalry, who had been disarmed and dismounted, succeeded in recovering some of their horses, and in escaping to Delhi. On 25th August the 51st Native Infantry at Peshawar, who had been collecting and concealing arms in their lines, mutinied; at so critical a station there could be no gentleness towards rebellion; the regiment, 870 strong, was "wiped out" during two days' fighting.

[2] See Map facing p. 196.

on which the force besieging Delhi depended for its Siege Train. The *raison d'être* of Sialkot as a military station was the necessity of being within striking distance of Jammu, the capital of the crafty and treacherous Maharaja of Kashmir, Golab Singh. These instances are typical.

All these posts were more or less in the hands of our armed servants, who were watching for an opportunity to strike, and then to join our enemies at Delhi. The British army was also watching—watching for an opportunity to disarm its opponents, and then to join its friends outside Delhi. Thus, representatives of the two forces lay, eye to eye, observing each other, in every station on the Panjab — the Europeans immensely outnumbered, but in possession of Artillery. The duty of the Movable Column just created was to fling its weight into the scales wherever they threatened to sink to British disadvantage, *i.e.* where a locality showed signs of tending to side with the mutineers, or when a Sepoy Corps succeeded in breaking away, and it was necessary to check it on its way to Delhi. Led by Neville Chamberlain, it had been doing excellent service. Sweeping hither and thither, it would suddenly appear and encamp beside a station in which trouble was expected, its mere presence acting as a sedative. Chamberlain, however, was shortly called to Delhi to fill the post of Adjutant-General to Sir Henry Barnard. His coming was welcomed by the Force; men rejoiced when they saw his pale stern face. "We shall see some Generalship now," said Hodson; and others declared that his presence "was worth the wing of a regiment."

At the urgent entreaty of John Lawrence, and in violation of all rules of military procedure, the command thus vacated was given to John Nicholson, who, though only thirty-five years of age and a regimental Captain, was granted the rank of Brigadier-General. So universal was

the recognition of his pre-eminent fitness for the post, that the appointment, irregular as it was, was received with acclamation. "Tools to the able," had been a maxim which John Lawrence had always striven to put into effect, and he insisted on it strenuously when on obedience to the principle hung issues of life and death. Surely the old Generals had given enough object-lessons on the folly of coupling power with age instead of with capacity. The new Brigadier-General took up his command at Jullundur on 21st June. The famous Mahtab Singh incident, which occurred next day, should have served as a danger-signal to those who thought that England's star had set, or imagined that they might presume to cross the will of her imperious representative.

The execution of the task Nicholson had undertaken was fraught with almost insuperable difficulties. The Movable Column—designed to strike such terror into the hearts of the disaffected in the Panjab as to deter them effectually from action—was totally inadequate to the purpose. It consisted of one British regiment (the 52nd), a troop of Horse Artillery, and Bourchier's Battery; of one Sepoy regiment (the 33rd Native Infantry), and one wing of Native Cavalry (the 9th Native Cavalry). To these must be added the 35th Native Infantry, which Nicholson had picked up at Hoshiarpur on his way to Jullundur, and incorporated with the Force, *because its disaffection was so notorious that he was afraid to leave it in his rear.* The men of the 33rd Native Infantry, also, were known to be awaiting an opportunity to strike their white comrades; and the men of the 9th Native Cavalry were suspected of harbouring similar intentions. The force at his disposal, therefore, was not only small but unreliable; he could depend on his British soldiers only. The Column, from the outset, was betrayed by what was false within.

Great was the delight of the traitors of the 33rd and 35th Native Infantry when the Column received orders to move Southward, for they imagined that they were being personally conducted, at British expense, to Delhi, where they intended to give expression to their disloyalty, either in the camp or in the city, as should prove most convenient to themselves. They must have wondered at the blindness of the redoubtable Warden of the Marches. Little did they know him.

From Jullundur the Column proceeded to Phillaur. The troops marched into the vicinity of the fort in the following order: the Artillery went first, its officers having been directed to take up positions on either side of the road when they had reached a certain distance from its walls, and there to load. It was followed by H.M. 52nd, which was halted on open ground a little further on; its men were told to load, and then to stand at ease. The Sepoys of the unsuspecting 35th Native Infantry marching behind, suddenly found themselves flanked by loaded Artillery, and faced by a British regiment standing to arms. Thus taken by surprise, they had no choice but to obey the order—"Pile arms." Their weapons were immediately put into carts collected for the purpose and safely disposed of within the fort. The disarmed Sepoys then marched on. The 33rd, which had been encouraged to lag behind, now came up and walked into the same trap. Thus Nicholson disarmed two dangerous regiments without firing a shot. "You have drawn the fangs of 1500 snakes," said an old Sikh Colonel, who was present.

Having "done its job" so admirably, the much-reduced but delighted Column expected to receive marching orders for Delhi immediately. John Lawrence, however, did not dare to part with so finely handled a weapon while his Province was studded with stations full of British women and children, and *armed* Sepoys, especially as he had now one

white regiment only—the 24th—on which to fall back in case of emergency; for, with this one exception, his original twelve British regiments were either tied to the task of watching disarmed mutineers, or had been sent to Delhi. A word from him, and Nicholson and his Column were back at Amritsar; the latter grumbling that the move should be Northward, not Southward.

Delhi was still untaken, and the effect of the long-protracted siege, with its still doubtful issue, was such that it was clearly necessary to disarm the native regiments at Pindi and Jhelum, *coûte que coûte.* The disarmament at Pindi was partially successful, but the attempt at Jhelum was disastrous. The Sepoys resisted, but were eventually overpowered; many were killed, many drowned, and many given up by villagers. Of the five hundred men on parade on 7th July, only about fifty survived on the following day. The news of these doubtful successes rallied the flickering courage of the Sepoys at Sialkot, who, nearly 1500 strong, were held in nominal check by forty Europeans. They arranged to murder their officers, and, slipping past Nicholson on the East, to pick up Jackson's Irregulars, the 59th, from Kangra, the 4th Native Infantry from Nurpur, and the men of the three disarmed regiments (the 33rd, 35th, and 54th) at Jullundur and Amritsar, and finally to march some four or five thousand strong to Delhi.[1] At dawn, on 8th July, therefore, they rose, broke open the gaol, murdered officers, civilians, ladies, and missionaries indiscriminately, plundered and burned the Government offices, and then started—laden with spoil—for the capital of the Mughals.

An exhausted drummer-lad rode into Nicholson's camp at Amritsar in the grey of the morning of the 9th July. His name was M'Dougal; he belonged to one of the mutinous regiments at Sialkot, and had ridden eighty miles on

[1] See Map, Grand Trunk Road, facing p. 196.

"scratch" mounts to bring this news, finding the way as best he might. Nicholson divined the mutineers' intentions, and determined to check them at a ford on the Ravi near Gurdaspur—some sixty miles from Sialkot and forty from Amritsar—*before* they received their expected reinforcements. They already had two days' start of him, so that rapidity of movement on his part was essential to success. At sunset on the 9th, the Column, which moved with Artillery, launched itself on its forty-mile march, eighteen of which were made during the night. With the light came the heat, which was tremendous. Nicholson had done all in his power to "save" his men. On hearing of the Sialkot disaster, he had disarmed and dismounted the 9th Native Cavalry—their horses, therefore, were available; he had also requisitioned the ponies of their grass-cutters, and two hundred native carts; so that everyone in turn had his "lift." "Even with these mitigations," writes Colonel Bourchier, "many fell victims to the heat; when mounted it was bad enough, but for an infantry soldier with his musket and sixty rounds of ammunition in his pouch, it was terrific." Good "Tommy Atkins," however, was determined to make the best of it. The men filled their helmets with leaves, they constructed arbours of boughs over their guns and carts, and they kept up a stream of laughter and chaff—the laughter and chaff with which Englishmen mask heroic endurance. The Force reached Gurdaspur late in the afternoon; the men were thoroughly exhausted, and some of the horses had to be shot. A record march had been made, however, and the situation saved. It was known that the mutineers were encamped on the ford eight miles distant.

A fierce encounter took place at noon next day—the 11th July—the mutineers, intoxicated with drugs, fought madly; little by little, however, they were pressed, with

great slaughter, back to the river ; then into the river ; and finally on to an island, midstream, which none of them left alive. The Column then made its way back to Gurdaspur. "It was long after dark," writes Colonel Bourchier, "before we arrived in camp, I can fairly say, dead-beat. A Sergeant died by my side of sheer exhaustion, and many of the 52nd shared the same fate. None, who have not experienced it, have any idea of the suffering of those exposed to the sun in an Indian battle in July."

Shortly after this, several Sepoy regiments laid down their arms peacefully. John Lawrence moved from Pindi to Lahore, where he and Nicholson met in council ; and, finally—all the disaffected Sepoys in the Panjab having been disarmed—the Chief Commissioner gave Nicholson the welcome order, "Go down to Delhi, and take it."

The reader has been reminded somewhat at length of the conditions under which the Sepoy-mutiny was allowed to break into flame, and of the manner and spirit in which it was met in the Panjab by John Lawrence and three of his ablest assistants, because both the failures and the successes described were typical : British successes throughout the crisis were never the outcome of material advantages but of character and intelligence, while British failures were always the result of the absence of these qualities.

While the Panjab leaders were planning and striking, General Anson at Ambala—where the troops for Delhi mobilised—was painfully endeavouring to get his army into motion. Although a storm had long been sighted, the Commander-in-Chief found nothing ready — no heavy Artillery, no carriage, insufficient ammunition, cholera in the barracks—to which he himself succumbed before the month of May ended—and mutiny in the ranks of the Sepoy regiments with the Force. It was not until the 25th

May—a fortnight after the news of the disaster had been received—that the army started. The men rested in their tents by day, and marched after sunset, on account of the overwhelming heat. "The nights were delicious," writes one of the Force; "the stars were bright in the dark deep sky, and fire-flies flashed from bush to bush. The air, which in Europe would have been called warm and close, was cool and refreshing to the cheek that had felt the hot wind during the day. Along the road came the heavy roll of the guns, mixed with the jingling of bits and the clanking of the steel scabbards of the Cavalry; the Infantry marched behind with a dull deep tread; camels and bullock-carts, with innumerable sutlers and camp-servants, toiled along for miles in the rear; while gigantic elephants stalked over bush and stone by the side of the road."

The Meerut Column joined the Commander-in-Chief's[1] force at Alipur—ten miles from Delhi and thirty-two from Meerut—on the 5th June, twenty-five days after it had allowed itself to be flouted by the native mutineers from whom it afterwards failed to protect Delhi. Three days later, after a hot march, the combined forces had a long, bloody, but victorious struggle with the mutineers entrenched at Badli-ki-sarai; the latter eventually broke in confusion, but, rallying, took up a strong position on the celebrated Ridge, a rocky spur lying, obliquely, opposite the Northern flank of Delhi. Our men, though much exhausted by the great heat and long conflict, pursued the retreating foe; a desperate struggle took place; the British troops, however, finally dislodged the enemy, took their guns, and occupied the coveted heights lying between the city and our ruined cantonments.

A cart-load of dead bodies in the uniforms of officers

[1] General Sir Henry Barnard, who succeeded to the supreme command on General Anson's death at Karnal on 27th May.

found near the Flag-staff Tower testified dumbly to the reality of the tragedy of the 11th. Below the tower, close to the river, lay Metcalfe House, completely wrecked. Its walls, stripped of their precious lining of woods and marbles, rose black and gaunt in the golden sunshine; while the grey ash and thin black films, which were all that was left of its celebrated library—the pride of two generations of princely Proconsuls—sometimes rose on the wings of the wind and fluttered over the Ridge into the wrecked cantonments. The latter presented a spectacle of utter desolation: only the walls of the houses were standing; things lay about the road in every direction—books, music, broken dinner-services, etc.

Dark thoughts must have filled the hearts of the men who assembled that evening beneath the Union Jack, floating once more from the flag-staff, as—breathing the cooler air blowing from the river—they watched the clouds in the sky and the red walls of the King's Palace burn together in the red light of the setting sun, and noted the warm opalescence of the minarets and swelling cupolas of the Jama Masjid and of the many other mosques of Delhi inlaid upon the delicate pallor of the evening sky. Dark thoughts indeed. The British held the Ridge, it was true, and were encamped behind its sheltering bulk, but they held it late in the day, nearly three weeks too late—weeks during which the flames of mutiny, massacre, and arson had flickered and flared from Calcutta to Peshawar.

Within a month of the outbreak at Meerut, there was hardly a regular regiment North of Cawnpore and Lucknow[1] which had not mutinied, murdered, robbed, and then escaped to the Muhammadan citadel which the incompetence of Englishmen in posts of authority had allowed to fall into the hands of Sepoys.

[1] See Maps opposite p. 196 and vol. ii. p. 106.

Mutiny and massacre had occurred at Aligarh on the 20th May, at Bulandshahr on the 21st, at Mainpuri on the 22nd—the day on which Herbert Edwardes and John Nicholson had disarmed four regiments at Peshawar—at Etawa on the 23rd; from all these stations the mutineers—having robbed and murdered to the top of their bent—had marched to Delhi. On the 30th May five regiments at Lucknow had fired their cantonments and treacherously murdered their officers; by the middle of June all the Police, as well as all the Sepoys in Oudh, had mutinied; and before the end of the month the curtain had risen on the heroic tragedy of the defence of the Residency, in which the death of Sir Henry Lawrence was an early incident. On the 31st[1] the Sepoys at Shahjahanpur surrounded the Church at service-time, and massacred the worshippers. On the same day three native regiments at Bareilly, led by a trusted friend and pensioner of the British Government, Khan Bahadur Khan, plundered and burnt the treasury, hanged three English gentlemen, and proclaimed the King of Delhi.

On 4th June the soldiers at Moradabad mutinied, shot their officers, and marched for Delhi. Early in June Nana Sahib massacred the fugitives, chiefly women and children who had escaped by boat from the mutineers of Fatehgarh to Cawnpore — the tragedies of the Ghat (27th June) and of the Well (15th July) were to follow. On the 6th June—the day before Sir Henry Barnard took the Ridge—the native officers at Jhansi swore loyalty on parade to white comrades whom they shot nevertheless in the afternoon. A few English officers escaped, with nineteen women and twenty-three children, to the

[1] On the same day Neville Chamberlain at Lahore took command of the Movable Column, with which—using it like a flail—he, and John Nicholson after him, separated grain from straw in the Panjab.

fort, which they held as best they might against attacks from without and treachery from within. Starved out, they surrendered at length on receiving assurance of personal security and safe-conduct to another station; immediately they left the shelter of the fort, however, they were bound together—the men in one group, the women and children in another—and were then riddled with bullets, bayoneted, and cut up with swords. This act is believed to have been inspired by the dispossessed Rani. On the same day, the 6th Native Infantry at Allahabad murdered its officers while they sat at mess—among them were seven unposted Ensigns who had just arrived from England—broke open the gaols, sacked the treasury, cut the telegraph lines, tore up the railways, battered the railway-engines with cannon, and butchered all the European women and children on whom they could lay hands.

It is unnecessary to continue this name-roll of the places in which women and children were butchered under circumstances of such fantastic horror that the mind instinctively invests what actually occurred with the unreality of the half-remembered terrors of a fevered dream. These incidents should be remembered, however, if we would enter into the feelings of the men who held the Ridge for three months through this desperate crisis, in the teeth of overwhelming numbers, treachery, sickness, and tropical heat.

Distorted accounts of these great events reached Alex Taylor on the Road, the works on which he was pressing to their hot-weather suspension. Some of the chief actors in the drama—John Lawrence, Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, Neville Chamberlain, and others—would stop, as they galloped from Peshawar to Pindi and back again, to give him authentic news. At sundown he would ride into

the fort at Attock which overlooked his boat-bridge and, being a post of great strategic importance, was strongly held. There he found many friends: among them, on the 13th May, the officers of the Guides, who, with their splendid Corps, had just made the first stage of their famous march to Delhi—thirty-six miles, the men fasting, for the Ramazan was in progress, during which no good Muhammadan may eat or drink between sunrise and sunset. On another occasion, he met there a dear and lifelong friend, Alfred Wilde[1]—"brother Jonathan"—who was making for Delhi also at the head of his eight hundred Riflemen, but was recalled, to his bitter disappointment, when well on his way thither, to replace the 55th Native Infantry which had mutinied and had been annihilated at Mardan.

Taylor, however, kept strictly to his work—with one exception only. When visiting Attock on the 20th May, he learned that the detachment of the 55th Native Infantry in the fort had broken away, and—having been joined by other mutineers—was marching tumultuously for Naushahra, where another detachment of the same Corps was stationed. It was believed that on their arrival the entire garrison would mutiny, loot the regimental magazines, cross the river, and, speeding through the civil station—not without bloodshed—make for the headquarters of the regiment, Hoti Mardan. This programme was not fully realised, for Taylor, hearing of the outbreak, acted with promptitude. Riding across country, he arrived at Naushahra *before* them, broke up the boat-bridge, scattered

[1] The late General Sir Alfred Wilde, G.C.B.; commanded the Frontier Force; Military Member of the Council of India in England; brother of Lord Penzance, and nephew to Lord Truro (Solicitor-General, Attorney-General, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, and Lord Chancellor of England). The tie of friendship which united these two officers was strengthened in after years by Alfred Wilde's marriage to Ellen Greene, daughter of Colonel Godfrey Greene, and first cousin to Taylor's wife.

the ferry-boats, and dispersed the oarsmen.[1] Great was the dismay of the traitors on receiving this check, for they dreaded an attack on their rear while effecting the passage of the river. The 10th Native Cavalry was brought out against them, but declined to act; and, though many of the mutineers were drowned in crossing the Kabul river, the majority succeeded in doing so, in reaching Mardan, and in seizing the fort.

May drew to its close; the "hot weather" made it imperative that active road-making should be reduced to a minimum; those officers who could do so obtained leave, and the navvies from distant mountain-valleys returned to their homes and harvests. As usual, therefore, early in June, Taylor returned, unwillingly enough, to his headquarters at Pindi, there to bury himself in the only part of his work which was irksome to him, viz., its indoor office-work, of which the chief features were accounts, estimates, and the like, naturally on a large scale and exceedingly complicated.

John Lawrence was then at Pindi, a fact which had converted a provincial military station into the centre of the Panjab Government. His presence there was accidental. *En route* for a much-needed holiday among the pines of Murree, he had been arrested at the foot of the hills by the ill news from Meerut and Delhi, and, from that moment, though in bad health and tormented by neuralgia, had worked unremittingly to secure the safety of the Panjab, and to further the capture of Delhi. From Pindi flashed the orders and poured the letters which put the officials concerned—men of all ranks, from the Governor-General and the Directors of the E. I. Company, to junior military and civil subordinates—into possession of wide

[1] "Lieutenant Taylor of the Engineers, like Horatius of old, cut away the bridge of boats, and thus, etc."—Letter from Herbert Edwardes, quoted by Lady Edwardes, *op. cit.*, i. p. 387.

views on the general situation, and—either by suggestion or command—pointed the way to success.

In June the outlook in Northern India was ominous, and grew more menacing from hour to hour. The British Power in the Panjab, as a whole, had succeeded in holding its own, so far; but the North-West Provinces, Rohilkhand, Oudh, Bundelkhand, and Jhansi were rapidly throwing off British rule. Delhi was still untaken. The British Force—lying on the Ridge within sight of the city, but too weak, numerically, to attack it—had to content itself with holding its line of communication with John Lawrence, to whom it looked for the reinforcements which alone could bring an assault within the sphere of reasonable tactics.

But, though so near the fount of power in the Panjab, Taylor stood outside the circle of the privileged few then in contact with the overworked Chief Commissioner. The latter, as far as he knew, regarded him only as the Executive Chief of Robert Napier's Road-staff—a man whose projects and their realisation made unwelcome demands on the Provincial budget, and of whose Corps the financier continually complained: "these Engineers never open their mouths without gulping lakhs of rupees." He was ignorant of the fact that John Nicholson had recommended him to the great civilian as a young officer with siege-experience, who would be likely to do good service at Delhi, and that the Chief Commissioner—who aimed at keeping the machinery of his civil administration undisturbed by this military crisis, and who still expected General Barnard to take Delhi shortly—was only waiting to see if it were really necessary for him to part with the energetic worker to whom the rapid progress of the Grand Trunk Road was due.

Taylor, therefore, with the lessons learned at Multan

fresh in his mind, watched events keenly, but, at first, never contemplated the possibility of abandoning the civil work on which he was engaged, in order to march against Delhi, which was outside his orbit, and over which it was confidently expected that the British flag would soon wave; for the full magnitude of the rebellion was not appreciated at once. Indeed, the proportions—political and military—it eventually assumed, were largely due to the incapacity of Generals like Hewitt and Johnstone, and to the slowness with which the army was put into motion. As time went on, however, it became only too evident that the capital of the Mughals would not fall in a night; that, if it did not fall soon, the whole of Northern India would be ablaze; and that its capture, in time to save Northern India, could be achieved only if the attacking army were largely reinforced by the fighting men of the Panjab, and that quickly.

The camp before Delhi then became the goal of every young man's desire. Taylor saw friend after friend, Corps after Corps, march thither, and his heart swelled with disappointment when, having seen them off, he returned to his accounts.

On the 8th June Colonel Chester, the Adjutant-General, was killed; shortly afterwards, Neville Chamberlain was appointed to the vacant post at Delhi, and John Nicholson was given the command of the Movable Column. On the 15th, the latter arrived at Pindi, spent two days there—largely in official converse with John Lawrence—leaving for Jullundur, where he was to take over his command, on the evening of the 17th. All Taylor's hopes of Delhi vanished with him. Evidently the Chief Commissioner meant to hold his subordinate's "nose to the grindstone of the Road." So, summoning to his aid all the philosophy at his disposal, he made up his mind to a long spell of office-

work ; to be preceded, however, by a few days' fishing on the Mahl, an excellent salmon-river in the neighbourhood. He and his friend, "Bill" Graham,[1] had long planned an expedition of the sort, and the project was now put into execution.

In the meantime events conspired in his favour. On Friday, 19th June, he was riding along the Road to inspect his works, preparatory to leaving them for a long "week-end," when he met Mr Thornton, the Commissioner of Pindi, who exclaimed : "Why, Taylor, what are you doing here ? You ought to be at Delhi !" "I only wish I were," was the rejoinder. "John Lawrence won't send me ! Someone must look after this road." That afternoon Mr Thornton broached the subject of Alex Taylor to the Chief Commissioner. The latter—who had just heard that the Chief Engineer at Delhi—a man of the Hewitt type[2]—had been recalled, and that Colonel Baird Smith, an able canal officer then at Roorkee, had been suggested as his successor—answered his friend's recommendations with a laconic "Send Taylor to me." Taylor, however, when wanted, was not to be found. He had "gone out fishing with Graham Sahib and was not coming back till Monday"—that was all his servants knew. Graham was staying with his cousin, Brigadier-General Campbell, then commanding the Pindi Division. A sowar was sent at a hand-gallop to the "General Sahib's" house, to ask Mrs Graham whether she could locate the two fishermen. These were eventually

[1] Surgeon-Major Henry William Graham, afterwards Assay-Master at the Bombay Mint. His sister was the wife of Taylor's friend, Dan Robinson, and his wife the sister of Taylor's future wife, and niece of his first chief, Colonel Godfrey Greene.

[2] When this officer arrived at the seat of war, it was found that he was accompanied by his Persian wife, who had some twenty or thirty camels, and half that number of carts, in her train.—Colonel Keith Young, C.B., Judge Advocate General, *Delhi*, Chambers, 1902, p. 67.

run to earth, rod in hand, knee-deep in the waters of the Mahl, some twenty miles distant. They rode joyfully back to Pindi when they learned that Taylor was wanted by John Lawrence. The young Engineer hoped, yet he went in trepidation; it might only be that he was to receive the "wigging" for exceeded estimates with which he was not unfamiliar.

"Taylor," said the Chief Commissioner, "I want you to go to Delhi directly. I should like you to take charge of your Corps, but your position will settle itself down there. Can you start to-morrow?" Taylor could; indeed, he could almost as well have started that moment, for his possessions in Pindi were few; arrangements, however, had to be made with the subordinate to whom he bequeathed the superintendence of his Road. "Have you a sword?" asked John Lawrence, knowing his man. No, Taylor had not; his worldly goods were stored in the little house at Murree; his friend, Sam Black,[1] who was present, had one, however, which was readily lent. His equipment, notwithstanding this loan, was meagre in the extreme. A sword was not the only thing he lacked. On Sunday he sent his *chaprasi* (messenger-servant) up to Murree, to collect such things as would be useful to his master in camp, directed him to procure camels or mules, to load them with these articles, and to march with them down to Delhi—some five hundred miles distant. Mrs Graham came to his immediate assistance with her husband's flannel-shirts, etc., and at 3.30 on the following day his friends saw him drive off with two other young officers in a dogcart for Delhi. His baggage was not voluminous: a portmanteau, so small that a coolie carried it on his head, and Sam Black's sword—not even a pistol. The Grahams' faces were bright as they cried "Good luck" after the traveller, but their hearts sank as

[1] The late General Black, C.S.I.

they returned to their own comfortable home; would they ever see that gay, helpful comrade again?[1]

The trio—who after the first stage went by mail cart[2]—seem to have driven post-haste all night and throughout the greater part of the day, in their eagerness to arrive at their goal; they stopped occasionally only to rest at a friend's house, or—to snatch a little food and sleep during the fiercest heat of the day—at dak-bungalows, or, failing these, at native sarais, and reached Lahore forty-eight hours after their departure from Pindi, having covered 180 miles of Taylor's unfinished Road.

This drive must have been most interesting to the young road-maker, for it gave him a bird's-eye view of his work, and enabled him to test the quality of his arrangements, the condition of his Road, and the industry of his subordinates. Lord Roberts—then a young subaltern, who had made the same journey some few days previously—gives the temperature in those parts as 117° F. in the shade, and states that twelve miles an hour, including stoppages, was the rate at which a self-respecting coachman would drive his unbroken ponies along a road which, in parts, was undeniably sketchy in the extreme.[3] It is intelligible, therefore, both that the three friends should have travelled largely at night, and that the drive should have been attended by accidents: the latter, however, were unimportant, resulting merely in sprained thumbs and lost cheroot-boxes.

From Lahore—where Taylor had a bath, a meal, and a short sleep at the house of his old Addiscombe friend, Charles Hutchinson—the travellers pushed on to Jullundur,

[1] In Mrs Graham's diary is the following entry: "22nd June. Musha came to tiffin, and afterwards we bade our dear old friend God speed, and he started for Delhi with Sir William Hamilton, H.A." Lieutenant Heath was also of the party.

[2] See Map facing p. 196.

[3] Roberts, *op. cit.*, i. p. 114.

some ninety miles distant, where at lunch-time they found themselves on the fringe of the central area of disturbance. They reached the deserted station a little more than a fortnight after General Johnstone had allowed the three Sepoy regiments stationed there to break out of cantonments and march to Delhi, three days only after Nicholson had taken over the command of the Movable Column there, and had made it the theatre of the famous Mahtab Singh incident, and the very day (24th June) on which the young Brigadier disarmed the mutinous 33rd and 35th Native Infantry at Phillaur, only thirty miles distant.

If the trio reached Ambala at dawn next day—as they seem to have done—they must have pushed on soon after lunch, for the distance to be covered was more than a hundred miles, the road much cut up by heavy traffic, and the passage of the Sutlej exceedingly tedious, as the bridge of boats had not been re-established after Ricketts' affair of the 9th. Under normal conditions Ambala boasted of a large and comparatively good hotel; as this, however, had been dedicated to the exclusive use of the sick and wounded sent back from Delhi, the travellers made the best of the crowded dak-bungalow, rested there during the hottest hours of the day, and made final purchases, for this was the last sight of shops they were likely to have for months, and Taylor, for one, was ill-equipped.

They must have pressed on early that afternoon, for twenty-four hours later they came on a detachment of the Cavalry of the loyal Raja of Jind at a point a hundred miles from Ambala and twenty from Delhi. The Jind officers explained that they were retiring before a rebel force, which, coming from Bagpat, had occupied Alipur—a station lying half way between the place where they were then conversing and Delhi; further progress that afternoon being impossible — so they averred — they urged

the travellers to abandon the idea of reaching Delhi that night, and to fall back with them. Nothing, however, was further from the thoughts of the three Englishmen. In spite of dissuasion, they took the two tired country-nags out of the trap in which the wiry little things had been driven some time already, and, annexing a third—found by chance tied to a post near the dak-bungalow—saddled all three, and, accompanied by a mounted policeman—picked up at the same station—rode off in high spirits towards Delhi.

The sun was sinking when they reached Alipur—occupied in force by the enemy, if the Jind men had spoken correctly. Somewhat to their dismay a large body of Native Cavalry turned out noisily on their approach, occupied the road, and advanced in their direction. There was nothing for it but to keep their heads and ride on. This they did, until the distance separating them from the approaching mutineers—for so they naturally thought the horsemen—had shrunk to 150 yards; they then halted, drew their swords and made sure that their pistols were handy, while the native policeman, spurring some twenty yards forward, cried "tum kaun" ("Who are you?"); the reply, "Raja Jind Sahib ke sowar" ("Horsemen of the Raja of Jind") fell as a pleasant surprise on anxious ears. Had it run otherwise, it would have fared ill with our Englishmen, badly mounted as they were. The report made by the Jind sowars had evidently been made to gain some private end.

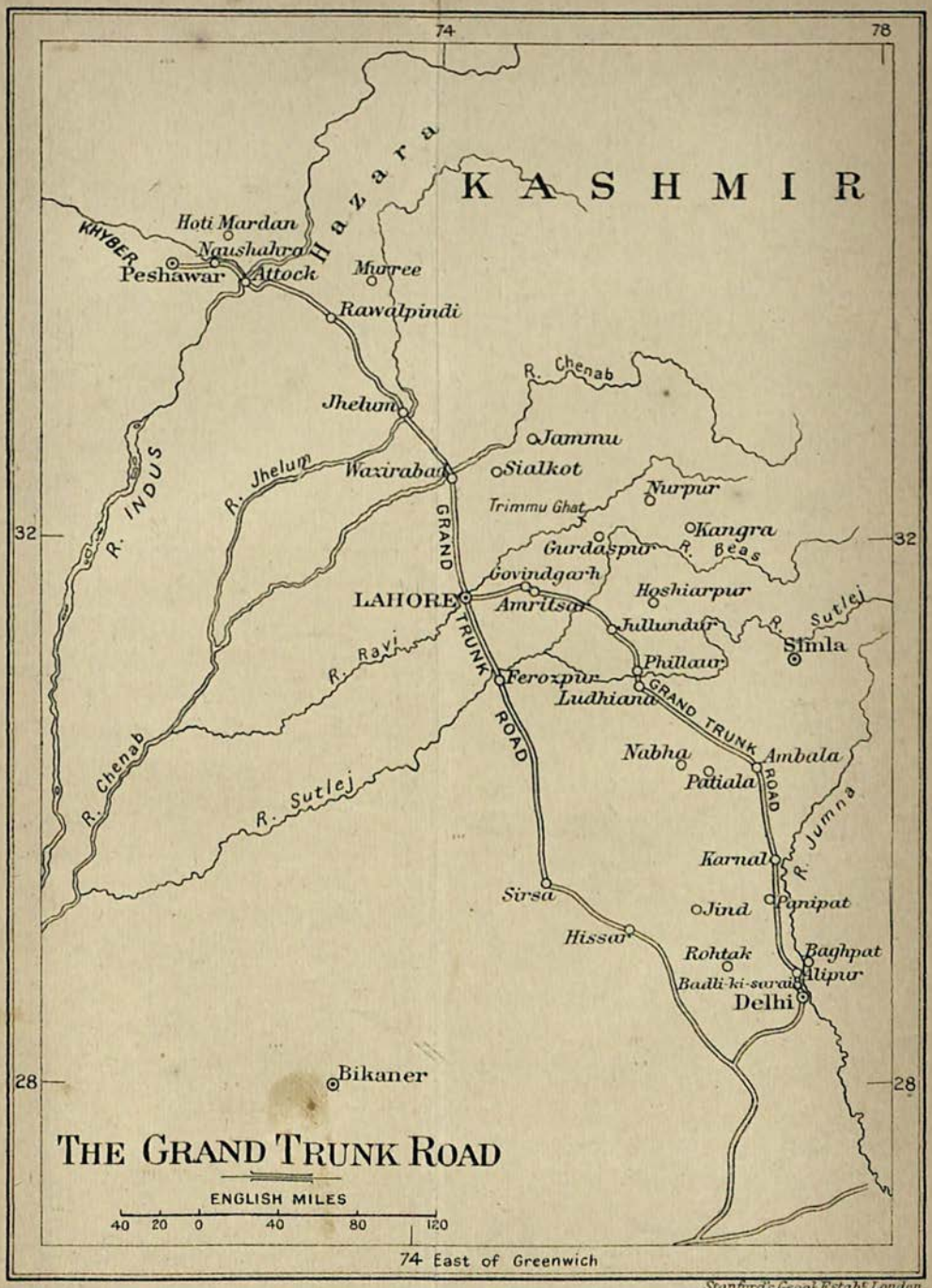
They were now within ear-shot of the roar of distant cannon; and—as they advanced—plunged deeper and deeper into country scarred with the sinister signs of a seat of war, and pervaded by the ever-increasing horrid stench of dead bodies. They had not gone far when they came upon a small body of British troops—a detachment of H.M. 8th and a battery of Artillery—who were also *en route*

for the camp, and who—surprised by night, and uncertain of the way—had halted, and were waiting for a guide. Darkness had closed in; the trio, however, volunteered to find the way into the camp and to send back guides, if they were provided with re-mounts, for the little country-breds they were riding were fairly tired out. These were readily produced, and, mounted on big Artillery horses, Taylor and his two companions pressed forward into the hot, unsavoury night. But one more small adventure awaited them. They were some three miles from camp when a party of horsemen—completely hidden in the darkness by a clump of trees and bushes—suddenly leapt out upon them. Happily, these proved to be a picquet of our own Carabineers, who gave the tired wayfarers a guide into the camp, and dispatched others to bring in the men and guns left near Alipur.

The journey—a little less than five hundred miles, covered at the height of the hot weather in five days—was practically at an end.

The three officers, once in camp, scattered to their respective quarters. Taylor went to the Engineers' camp, the centre of which was a good-sized building used as a mess-house—round which the officers' tents were grouped. Having nothing with him but a portmanteau—no tents or servants—he thankfully availed himself of the shake-down offered him by his old friend, George Chesney,[1] and, in spite of the hardness of his bed, slept through the roar of cannon and the noise of bugling until the rising sun roused him to the consciousness of awaking at last in the camp before Delhi.

[1] The late General Sir George Chesney, R.E., K.C.B., K.C.S.I., M.P., first President of the Royal Engineering College, Coopers Hill.


74
78
KASHMIR
Hazara
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Murree
Rawalpindi
R. Chenab
Jhelum
Jammu
Sialkot
Wazirabad
R. Jhelum
R. INDUS
Nurpur
Trimmu Ghat
Kangra
32
Gurdaspur
R. Beas
Govindgarh
Hoshiarpur
LAHORE
Amritsar
Jullundur
R. Sutlej
Simla
R. Ravi
Phillaur
Ferozpur
Ludhiana
GRAND TRUNK ROAD
Nabha
Ambala
Patiala
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Karnal
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ENGLISH MILES
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CHAPTER VI

THE CAMP BEFORE DELHI

WHAT of the world to which Alex Taylor awoke next morning—the world of the camp before Delhi?

Dawn found him, glass in hand, on the platform of the Flag-Staff Tower, eagerly taking stock of the position.[1] Opposite, but separated from him by a wide triangle of undulating ground, lay Delhi—a long line of low rampart-wall,[2] enclosing masses of irregular buildings, overhung by cupolas and minarets. Many of its most notable edifices were recognisable. The well-known silhouette of the Jama Masjid—three buoyant cupolas and two upspringing minarets—was imprinted on the South-Western sky; and beyond it, massive and pale in the distance, hung the solemn curves of Humayun's tomb, outside the city-wall. More to the left rose the King's Palace, its vast bulk[3] crowned by an efflorescence of pierced marble screens, domes, semi-domes, and long drooping window-eaves. He probably lost no time in the contemplation of all this beauty, however, but fixed his attention on the *military* points of the scene at his feet. Doubtless he bent his eyes with interest on the rough walls of the old Pathan fort of

[1] See Map facing p. 314.

[2] Considerably more than a mile on its Northern front (*i.e.* from the Water Bastion to the Kabul Gate), and seven miles in total length. It enclosed an area of about three square miles.

[3] It is said to have housed 7000 people during the siege.

Salimgarh, which rose in such dramatic proximity to the delicate loveliness of the Palace-top, and the guns from which commanded the bridge-of-boats and raked the river for upwards of a mile. He must also have identified the bastions and gates on the city's Northern front—the Water Bastion, which abutted on the river, as the name suggests, the Kashmir Gate and Bastion, the Mori Bastion, at the North-Western angle of the ramparts, and the Kabúl Gate, through which the Grand Trunk Road enters Delhi.

On his left lay the river, the Jumna. Lying between banks more than a mile apart, it picked its path along its bed capriciously: now threading a narrow and intricate way through shallow lagoons, bordered by sandbanks; now stretching a wide silver arm beside the long reaches of rank jungle and malarious swamp on its left; now hugging its right bank, on which rose the terraces, tended gardens, and orange-groves of Metcalfe House and the Kudsia Bagh; and, finally—gliding past the Water Bastion, through the bridge-of-boats, past Salimgarh and the steep walls of the King's Palace—swept swiftly South-Eastward, to its union at Allahabad with its sister-river, the Ganges.

The Ridge, on which he stood—an outcropping of hard quartz rock some ninety feet high—lay at an oblique angle to the Northern city-front. Springing from the river-bank at a distance of about 2½ miles from the Water Bastion, it ran South-Westward to a point some 1200 yards from the Mori Bastion, where it dropped abruptly, was lost for three-quarters of a mile or more, and then, rising again, ran on, in the same South-Westerly direction. Both the road connecting the Panjab with Delhi, and the Delhi Canal, ran through the depression separating these two wings of rock.

The undulating triangular space between the Ridge and the city was thickly wooded near the river, and was intersected throughout by walls, roads bordered by shade-trees,

and deep and narrow stream-beds[1] then dry and choked with brushwood. Near the city it was studded with such houses, enclosed gardens, huts, mosques, and tombs as would naturally spring up outside the walls of a great and populous oriental city. Buried among the trees between the Flag-Staff Tower and the river lay the ruins and outhouses of Metcalfe House; while, about half a mile from the Kashmir Gate, rose Ludlow Castle, the seat of the Commissioner of Delhi, also embedded in trees and standing in a walled enclosure. This triangle was commanded by the enemy's guns on the walls; its South-Easterly portion was in the enemy's hands—the mutineers occupied Ludlow Castle permanently, and, at the outset, Metcalfe House, also.

If—turning his back on the city—Taylor looked North-Westward, he would find the camp and cantonments lying immediately at his feet; and a little beyond and parallel with them, the great Jhil Canal, the clear and abundant waters of which were so inestimable a boon to our army throughout that hot summer. Crossing these shaded waters, his eye would range unchecked over interminable reaches of tropical morass, sometimes reclaimed and covered with orange and banana groves, but sometimes, especially to the West, thick with impenetrable vegetation—jungle growths, beds of bamboo, reeds, etc. This mass of swamp-fed verdure—intersected by high walls and drainage-cuts, and studded with the huts of natives, and the massive ruins of ancient buildings—gave formidable cover to the mutineers, who, led by native guides, frequently endeavoured to attack the British camp from the rear. He would also have overlooked the so-called "Valley of the Shadow of Death"—through which troops reached their posts on the Ridge. This way being open to the shots which sailed over the batteries was most unsafe. "Dead camels, horses, and

[1] Nullas.

bullocks lay in every direction in this valley," writes Sir Edward Thackeray, "and the stench was almost unbearable."

The Flag-Staff Tower—from the platform of which this magnificent view of the seat of war could be obtained—was a favourite rendezvous of officers off duty; cheroot in hand, they would congregate in its neighbourhood towards sundown to enjoy the cooler and moister air which rose from the river, or to watch the last rays of the sun invest the Eastern capital at their feet with the passing glamour of fleeting fires; or—more often—to discuss the events of the day, and, their field-glasses to their eyes, to criticise the latest evolutions of the Force upon the ground they overlooked. It was from the Flag-Staff Tower that British officers, mute with indignation, watched mutineers wearing our uniforms, carrying our arms, and using English words of command, march in their thousands, to the sound of British tunes, across the bridge-of-boats into Delhi, thence to attack us from the shelter of the fortress we had striven to make impregnable, with the arms and ammunition of which we had made so plentiful a store against the day of need. It was to the Flag-Staff Tower that, in days not far distant, the wounded General—Neville Chamberlain—would have himself carried, when the long, hot autumn day darkened to its close; his friend, John Nicholson,[1] going on before, to see that the sick man was not unnecessarily exposed to the enemy's fire.

If Taylor, leaving the Flag-Staff Tower, walked South-Westward, by the excellent road which ran along the crest of the Ridge, he would pass various buildings which had become centres of fortified posts. First, the Mosque, a

[1] "By the time our first battery was opened I was able to go out in a doolie on to the Ridge and watch the practice. Nicholson would frequently insist upon escorting me, and no woman could have shown more consideration."—Letter from Neville Chamberlain to Herbert Edwardes. Forrest: *Life of Sir N. Chamberlain*, Blackwood, 1909, p. 371.

massive Pathan structure, left by one of the many waves of invasion which have sown the precincts of Delhi with the gaunt masonry-and-rubble skeletons of defeatured buildings. This mosque, however, was in excellent condition, and sheltered a British picquet of considerable size. Next came the Observatory, an ancient Hindu structure, built for astronomical purposes. Further on rose a large modern bungalow—built by an old Mahratta nobleman, who had died a short time previously and had been a popular member of the local Anglo-Indian society—and called, after him, "Hindu Rao's House." Surrounded by a garden of flowering shrubs, and by extensive outhouses, it gave shelter to a large picquet, and was held with determined and continuous gallantry by Charles Reid[1] and his brave little Gurkhas, supported by detachments of the 60th Rifles and of the Guides, from the day on which the Ridge was occupied (8th June) to the day of the successful assault (14th September). Closely associated with the picquet at Hindu Rao's House were the three principal Ridge-Batteries, and also three important posts—the Sammy[2] House, of which the centre was a small Hindu temple; the Crow's Nest, a precipitous crag, a favourite resort for riflemen; and Sabzi Mandi; all more or less overlooking the shallow gorge through which the Grand Trunk Road and the Western Jumna Canal ran into Delhi through or beside the Kabul Gate.

This South-Western extremity of the Ridge—all-important strategically, because it abutted on to the road—gradually came to bristle with Batteries, connected with each other and with Hindu Rao's House by trenches. The erection of these defences, generally at night, and frequently

[1] The late General Sir Charles Reid, K.C.B.

[2] Sammy House=Swami, an idol=an idol-house or temple: Tommy Atkins' irreverent corruption.

under fire, was a matter of considerable difficulty, for, owing to the geological conformation of the Ridge—a rock of naked quartz—not a spadeful of earth was procurable near some of the sites, to which earth had to be brought from some distance in sand-bags or in hand-carts through the "Valley of the Shadow of Death."

From this blunt, South-Western end of the Ridge Taylor dominated not only the Delhi Canal and the all-important Panjab Road, but Sabzi Mandi—a village extending from the Western slopes of the Ridge across the road—Kishanganj, and Paharipur, suburbs climbing the flanks of the Southern *continuation* of the Ridge, and extending beyond the Lahore Gate. The two latter contained groups of masonry houses, which the enemy fortified and used against us with deadly effect, and which were the sites of hostile enfilading Batteries.

From the same point, the fresh arrival's eye ranged over the wide expanse of arid country covered with buildings, ruins, and gardens lying beyond Paharipur and Kishanganj to the West and South of Delhi. This was never the seat of military operations, for, owing to the tenuity of the British Force, the investment of the city was never practicable. From the middle of July onwards no one in camp doubted that to hold the Ridge and to keep open the communications with the Panjab was all that could be attempted before the arrival of the Siege Train and the full tale of reinforcements from the Panjab.

If Taylor—once again changing his outlook—faced North-Eastward, along the axis of the Ridge, and glanced but a little to his left, he would see the white tents of our camp collected at the base of its Northern slopes, together with the ruined houses of the cantonments, and—in the distance, nearer the river—the tents of our native troops. On his left hand lay this little camp—a very small one, six

thousand men all told—without a Siege Train, and with a sick-list of nearly a thousand men in hospital; and on his right a fortified historic capital, seven miles in circumference, with a population of some 150,000 souls, with their sovereign in their midst; which contained, moreover, some 15,000[1] highly-trained mutinous soldiers, who were in possession of abundant Artillery and practically unlimited ammunition, and who fought with the knowledge that they must win or die. Undoubtedly the scales were unevenly weighted. But—unequal as was the strength of the two forces—the British army was still bent on the aggressive tactics which it was afterwards obliged to temporarily abandon. At the end of June and the beginning of July camp-talk was all of taking Delhi.

This journey along the road which was the spinal cord of the Ridge-fortifications, was doubtless not without incident, for it was open to Artillery- and musketry-fire throughout its course, and continued so for some time. "The whole Ridge had remained unconnected by any sort of breastwork," writes one of the Engineer officers present, Lieutenant William Warrand;[2] "all communications between the Batteries and picquets had been effected at eminent peril; the relieving guards, the officers on duty, the native servants, all had had to run the gauntlet of the enemy's fire between point and point. Taylor remedied this evil: an *almost* unbroken line of breastwork was run from the Flag-Staff Tower to our Batteries on the extreme right." The British soldier is hard to please; he must have his grumble. "Why, sir, we ain't never wounded now, sir, but in the 'ead, sir," he complained.

In spite of these breastworks, however, this road never

[1] In July; eventually 30,000.

[2] *Royal Engineer Journal*, "Reminiscences of the Siege of Delhi," by the late Major-General W. E. Warrand, D.L., R.E.

became a place for a quiet walk, as is shown by George Medley's account of his introduction to it some six weeks later (7th August). "I went out in the evening," he writes, "with Taylor, our able second-in-command, to have a look at our Batteries. We drove up to the Observatory in a dogcart, but the Mori Bastion was sending a few shots in our direction, and our horse plunged so with fright that he nearly ran away with us.[1] Dismounting, we entered the left Battery, which was then replying to the fire of the Mori, and had not been there five minutes when a well-aimed shell from that bastion, bursting short, luckily, sent a shower of dust and stones about us, and gave one of the Artillery officers a sharp cut on the skull. We then went on and looked at the Batteries . . . with no other adventure. The usual desultory firing was going on from the Mori and from Paharipur, and as we descended the slope of the Ridge and approached the Sammy House the continual 'ping-ping' of musket-bullets over our heads showed that we were within range of the enemy's skirmishers in the dense brushwood and copses of trees around. This sort of annoyance was perpetual; it never entirely ceased by night or day. Pandy had any amount of men, and could afford to throw away plenty of ammunition on the speculation of a chance shot knocking over a man, which, of course, it sometimes did."[2]

[1] This poor horse died on that spot seven days later. "Dear Dan," writes Taylor to his usual correspondent, "condole with me! They have been and killed my poor mare; the best horse I have had for a long time! I am so sorry for the poor thing! I had dismounted at the foot of the Observatory, from the top of which I had some angles to take, and had got to the top of the stairs, when a 24-pound shot grazed the parapet of the Battery and struck her behind the shoulder, breaking her back-bone—*and* my saddle! She fell over, and died in a few minutes. It is bad luck losing a good horse, *and* a saddle; but I ought to be (and am) glad that I was not riding her at the time. I should have lost my right leg, which would have interfered with our contemplated excursion to the Mahl."

[2] Julius George Medley, *A Year's Campaigning in India*, Thacker, London, 1858, pp. 49 ff.

As the sun rose high in the heavens the newcomer probably left the Ridge—the rocks of which, long ere mid-day, became so hot that they scorched the naked hands laid on them,[1]—and dropped back into the Engineers' quarters in camp, the centre of which was the Sapper mess-house—a fairly large three-roomed house, which fortune had spared when the mutineers destroyed the cantonments. This typical young officer's bungalow consisted of a large high central room running through the building from end to end, with two smaller rooms off it, and a wide veranda. In the central living-room was a large mahogany billiard-table, which had been found almost intact in the midst of ruin. Its edges had been sawn off; and it now formed a table at which some twenty Engineer-officers dined amidst swarms of flies, and on which slept some of those unfortunate beings whose tents had not yet come up, while others snatched what rest they could in the veranda.

The following is Taylor's description of life in these quarters:—"I found all the Engineers in a big house in cantonments. We have since formed a mess, have got up a punka, and are comfortable enough, except that there is always a horrid row going on! There are some twenty of us in a house as large as the one I had at Pindi—three big rooms. We pack heads and tails under the punka when off duty, and read, and write, and talk, as if we were engaged on the most common-place ordinary business, instead of being charged with the somewhat responsible task of putting some 10,000 or 12,000 Pandies to death! The villains! they shoot very vigorously from behind stones; but, when closed in on by one-tenth of their number, put up their hands and beg to be let off! Now and then the contrary takes place, but this is the rule. . . . We are in good heart

[1] General Hope Grant says that the cannon-balls used at Delhi were sometimes too hot for the gunners to handle.

down here. I think we shall be in Delhi, and back to Pindi, sooner than you appear to expect."[1] An optimistic opinion, which subsequent events did not justify.

What of the life in the Delhi camp? Strenuous it was, combative, and virile; no one lay on a bed of roses, and no one wished to do so. Each day, as it came, was bright with adventurous effort and animated by heroic purpose. Its material conditions were hard—so hard that they would have been intolerable did man live by bread alone, or had they been imposed as a punishment, and not lightly borne as negligible by-products of the supremely desirable.

The Force was immensely outnumbered, and, consequently, much overworked. The mutineers fought from behind the shelter of fortifications; but, when Barnard's little army took the Ridge, its defences had still to be both planned and erected, the latter often under fire. Its outposts, and especially its central post at Hindu Rao's House, were the objects of constant attack. It had been the intention of the captors of the Ridge—3000 men in all—to take the city by assault in June. This was *expected* of them by the two great civil Governors concerned, Lord Canning and John Lawrence. But when Alex Taylor arrived, it was becoming evident that the strength of the Delhi Field Force was utterly inadequate to that task; and that Sir Henry Barnard's army would be wise to content itself with maintaining its grip on a position of great strategic strength and on its communications with its base, until considerably reinforced from the North. These reinforcements, however,

[1] In a postscript to this note, he says to Dan Robinson, who had taken the little Murree-house under his protection, and had suggested letting it, "I do not like renting the house. I have offered it to young Medley and Humphry of the Engineers; they are welcome to it." Medley came down to Delhi afterwards; while Humphry won a most honourable V.C. when serving with Gerrard's column after Delhi had fallen (see vol. ii. p. 141).

were not only tardy in arrival, but could never be otherwise than small in bulk. The mutineers, on the other hand, swept, regiment after regiment, into the city through its Southern, Eastern, and Western gateways, and out of it through its Northern exits—bent on trampling out the white man on whose destruction their very existence depended. They surged, wave after wave, against the British Force, which, though outnumbered sometimes in the proportion of ten to one, sometimes twenty to one, always drove them back, generally with heavy loss. The individuals of whom these waves were composed, changed, but not the materials of the rock against which they beat, and that rock was not of stone, but of flesh and blood.

Nor was the Force outnumbered only. It contained traitors. The loyalty of certain of its members was more than doubtful. Officers were sometimes shot from behind, and when in positions inaccessible to the enemy's fire. It was eventually necessary to send several native regiments back from the front.

The heat was great. The thermometer registered 112°–120° F. in tents often pitched over pits for greater coolness. The camp was treeless; and June, July, August, and part of September were the hottest months in the year. The mutineers knew that the sun fought on their side, as it had once done for Joshua, and deliberately attacked when its rays were fiercest: sunstroke and heat-apoplexy were as common a result of an engagement as wounds. In deadly association with this burning sun were torrents of rain. "The troops came in drenched," is a frequent entry in the diaries and letters of the time. The results of the union of heat and rain were fever, ague, cholera, and dysentery. On the day before the siege began (6th September), Hodson writes: ". . . everything is stagnant, save the hand of the destroying Angel of Sickness; we

have at this moment 2500 in Hospital, of whom 1100 are Europeans—out of a force of 5000 Europeans! Delhi in September is proverbial, and this year we seem likely to realise its full horrors."[1] The Hospital of which he speaks means a building, doctors, and medical appliances, but no nurses. Florence Nightingale's career of mercy was then in its infancy; the sick and wounded were nursed by comrades, who, worn out by a hard day's fighting, often merely snored the night out in the proximity of their patients. Officers generally preferred to be nursed by their own servants in their own tents, where they could command a hard string-bed—a luxury unknown to the rank and file, the majority of whom, so Lord Roberts writes, "had to lie on the ground with only such shelter from the burning heat and drenching rain as a . . . tent could afford." "Anæsthetics and antiseptics were then unknown," he adds, "consequently few of the severely wounded recovered, and scarcely a single amputation case survived."[2]

To the suffering born of heat, wet, discomfort, fatigue, wounds, sickness, bad nursing, and extempore sanitation, must be added two disgusting torments: (1) the stench rising from the unburied bodies of men and animals, which too often lay where they fell in spite of the efforts of the sanitary authorities, vigorously seconded by bands of jackals and by scavenging birds, vultures, and the like: (2) and plagues of flies, from the same source.

These, however, were mere material discomforts, the instinctive effort to meet which with colours flying is exhilarating. Death and pain are essential parts of a soldier's life; it is they which make it heroic, and transmute banners and gold lace from silk and tinsel into emblems of gallantry.

Material discomfort had nothing to do with certain

[1] *A Leader of Light Horse*, by Captain Trotter, Edinburgh, 1901, p. 252.
[2] Roberts, *op. cit.*, i. p. 195.

minor notes, ominous and insistent, which make themselves heard through the determined optimism of the letters from the camp. A nightmare shape brooded continually in the background of the besiegers' thoughts. There were 10,000 English women and children in the Panjab alone. What would be their fate if Delhi did not fall soon? Every man in the Force was fighting, not for glory or personal honour, or even only for racial predominance, but for the lives and honour of British women. The issues at stake were the deepest that life holds. The appeal made was to the chivalry of Northern manhood. Every soldier on the Ridge was a knight, and bore the glove of womanhood on his heart. "For us men the worst that can happen is easy," writes Neville Chamberlain, "but the blood runs cold when one thinks of the defenceless women and children."[1] It was the danger overshadowing these helpless creatures which spurred our soldiers to exertions which were almost superhuman. Time might mean so much. If Delhi did not fall soon, the Panjab might rise, and then would be the opportunity of its counterparts of the ruffians of Meerut and the Princes of Delhi. This torturing thought made the waiting policy enforced by circumstances well-nigh unendurable.

But, for all this, the camp was a rather gay place than otherwise. Although their bodies and their hearts were so rudely battered by destiny, the spirits of the soldiers on the Ridge were boyishly high: "jolly," "in good heart," "snug," and "all serene"—so they described themselves. "We are getting accustomed to the heat, and, as to the flies, we are doing them with 'chics'"; so writes Alex Taylor. "Cholera, too," he continues, "is behaving well, and appears satisfied, for the present at least. Strong rain and strong sun take it turn about. During the rain I feel like an old

[1] Forrest, *op. cit.* (*Sir N. Chamberlain*), p. 332.

duck; during the sunshine I take off my coat and am punka-ed." On another occasion he gives the following report: "I have been very seedy, drinking *bad water when very hot* the cause, but am quite jolly again." Hot, wet, ill, without servants, tents, or privacy, he never described himself as otherwise than "all serene"; and he was but one among many of like mettle.

At times the old cantonments resounded with music. Bands played at the "jolly genial mess-dinners" of which Hervey Greathed writes with such enthusiasm. There were many excellent singers in the camp, and only too many amateur performers on the flute and cornet who practised conscientiously. The Engineers actually got up an instrumental quartet. Football was an institution. Alex Taylor crosses his letters to Dan Robinson with entreaties for india-rubber football cases of carefully indicated dimensions. Rackets were played in the courts near Metcalfe House, and the games were none the less exciting because a shot *might* lob into the enclosure. The less energetic sat beside the jhil, when they were off duty, and fished as solemnly as if they were at Twickenham. Nor did they have it their own way altogether, for the canal was as full of swimmers as is the Serpentine on a midsummer Sunday morning.

Whatever hardships men had to endure in camp, boredom was not of their number. The company was of the best. The very name-roll of the leading spirits in camp makes exhilarating reading, so gallant are the memories it evokes. Where all were brave, it is almost invidious to particularise; it is permissible, however, perhaps, to note the Panjab friends, not of his Corps, whose names were most frequently on Taylor's lips — John Nicholson, Neville Chamberlain, "Johnnie" Watson[1] and Dighton Probyn[2] of the Panjab

[1] General Sir John Watson, V.C., G.C.B.

[2] Right Hon. Sir Dighton Probyn, V.C., G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.S.I.

Cavalry, Henry Norman,[1] John Coke[2] of the "Cokies," Alfred Wilde, James Brind,[3] Henry Tombs,[4] and Fred Roberts[5] of the Artillery, for all of whom his admiration was only matched by his affection.

Actual warfare, moreover, is the most exciting of all forms of sport. It stirs primitive passions. Not a day passed without its quota of adventures, sometimes amusing, sometimes tragic, and it was of the former that men talked.

Now it was Hodson—a "crack" with whom, so men declared, was as good as a glass of champagne—who would sweep into camp, still vibrating with the elation of some daring mounted reconnaissance. His spirits always rose with gathering clouds. For instance, when the besiegers—or, to speak more correctly, the men besieged on the Ridge—first learned that a vast impenetrable area of disaffection separated them from Calcutta and British reinforcements, and that all means of telegraphic connection with the South and East were destroyed—that they were isolated, in fact—there were some who drew long faces. A triumphant shout, however, burst from Hodson's lips. "Hurrah!" he cried; "hurrah! we are as snug as a bug in a rug! No more orders from headquarters! We can do what we like!" His delight bade apprehension flee.

Now it was a private of the Rifles, laughing as he thought of the shell that had burst in the very midst of the mountain of flour heaped outside Hindu Rao's House—the source of the regimental daily bread. There had been a thud, an explosion, and a sudden snowy cloud, out of which sundry scared native bakers had emerged, their faces, hair, and

[1] Field-Marshal Sir Henry Norman, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., C.S.I.
[2] General Sir John Coke, G.C.B.
[3] General Sir James Brind, G.C.B.
[4] Major-General Sir Henry Tombs, V.C., K.C.B., R.H.A.
[5] Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, K.G., V.C., etc.

bodies blanched by flour, as well as by terror. On another occasion it was a party of Gurkhas, grinning, as one of them told of the shell that had just travelled through the cook-house—again at Hindu Rao's—and, passing through a box in which some of the few delicacies the camp could produce had been stored, had bespattered the Commandant's servants with potted salmon and tinned mangoes.

Sometimes, however, the play of a single shell would work tragic havoc. On the 17th of June Charles Reid writes: "At about 3 p.m. a 32-pounder round-shot came smashing into the portico of the 'House' (Hindu Rao's again) . . . killing Ensign Wheatley, a Havildar, and four of my men (Gurkhas), besides two Carabineer orderlies and a driver, and wounding Lieutenant Tulloch and three of my Gurkhas, one of whom—Ticca Ram—died that evening. This little fellow was one of the best shots in the regiment. He had killed twenty-two tigers in the Dun. He was asleep, poor fellow, when wounded. Nine killed and four wounded by one round shot, and the regimental colours cut in two!"

Thanks to the mixture of races forming the Force, warfare before Delhi was varied and rich in local colour, as is shown by the following anecdotes taken at random from one of Taylor's letters, dated 27th July. "This is a Gurkha story," he writes. "Two men, one belonging to the 60th and the other a Gurkha, were out skirmishing. A Pandy was behind a wall, over which he was seen to put his head two or three times, to have a look preparatory to taking a shot. The Gurkha crept along his own side of the wall, and, when the Pandy's head came over again, sprang up, caught its hair with his left hand, and, with the kukri in his right, severed the neck, all in one sweep, to the utter astonishment of the Rifleman who was looking on.

Now for a Panjabi tale. The Guides and Cokies are

much appreciated here. Some days ago I was sitting with some of the latter in one of the advanced trenches. Suddenly we heard a Pandy call out from the trees in our front: 'Khabardar, Khabardar! ham abhi ate!'[1] to which a Cokie sang out in reply: 'O Matadin! Matadin! ho!' (with a hillman's flourish) 'dauro mat, chale ao, chale ao-o-o-o-o!'[2] But Matadin would not come on! Sparring of this kind is common.

Now for a Guides' story. A hundred Guides were caught in an enclosure, the wall of which was 4½ feet high. Pandy got up to the wall on the outside, the Guides stuck close to the wall on the inside; neither could show a head above the wall without being instantly shot, so both parties pelted each other with stones, on the principle of what goes up must come down. Both sides kept at this for, it is said, half an hour, until the Guides were reinforced by some Gurkhas, when over the wall they went with a jump. Eighty-eight Pandy bodies were counted afterwards on the ground. . . . They are ripping fellows! . . .

The Rifles, too, are A1! Sikhs, Gurkhas, Guides, all agree that they are 'burra tugra Sipahi, yih kala gora log'[3]

Now for Pandy's cavalry. Many days ago a troop of Pandy's cavalry got into our camp. A party of them were left outside as supports. When the alarm sounded, Hodson turned out with some sixty or seventy men of his Corps and Brigadier Grant with a hundred or eighty of the 9th Lancers; when they got into the open they saw a body of ninety Cavalry in front, advancing at a slow pace in the same direction as themselves. They sent out to see who they were. 'A picquet, come along! Pandy is in front!' was the reply. The officer commanding them was seen to

[1] "Take care, take care. I am just coming."

[2] "O Matadin! Matadin! ho! don't run, come along, come, come, come!"

[3] "Great, strong soldiers, these dark white-fellows."

halt his men at intervals and correct their dressing. *This was Pandy's support.* Hodson and Grant marched with them for nearly three miles, fully believing them to be our own men, when suddenly they were seen to break into a gallop and ride rapidly down a cross-road to Delhi. Nothing but the presence of mind of the fellow in command saved this party. Either Hodson or Grant could have polished the men off had they known them to be 'Pandies'; but the coolness of the villain in halting and dressing his men at intervals disarmed suspicion!"

These tales of native promptitude and courage would be incomplete without Lord Roberts' delightful story of Ruttun Singh.[1] "Ruttun Singh," he says, "was an old Patiala Sikh, who had been invalided from the service. As the 1st Panjab Infantry—the 'Cokies'—neared Delhi, Major Coke saw the old man standing in the road with two swords. He begged to be taken back into service. When Major Coke demurred, he said: 'What, my old Corps going to fight at Delhi without me! I hope you will let me lead my old Sikh company into action again. I will break these two swords in your cause!' Coke acceded to the old man's wish, and throughout the siege of Delhi he displayed the most splendid courage. At the great attack on the Sammy House on the 1st and 2nd August, Ruttun Singh, amidst a shower of bullets, jumped on to the parapet and shouted to the enemy, who were storming the picquet: 'If any man wants to fight, let him come here, and *not stand firing like a coward!* I am Ruttun Singh of Patiala.' He then sprang down among the enemy, followed by the men of his company, and drove them off with heavy loss."[2]

Nor can this subject be dismissed without reference

[1] Roberts, *op. cit.*, i. p. 254.

[2] He was killed in the assault on 14th September.

to the cool courage habitually shown by our unarmed coolies and domestic servants. "The Engineer officers," writes Sir Edward Thackeray, "had to take parties of unarmed coolies out at dusk, their work usually consisting of felling the trees and bushes between the Ridge and the city, and in clearing the ground in front of the picquets. Attacked by the enemy in the darkness and rain, it was wonderful how patiently these poor coolies bore their sufferings. Their conduct was a matter of universal admiration."[1] One of the commonest sights on the Ridge towards mid-day, or sunset, was a native servant in spotless linen, moving slowly along the road that crested the rock, and in his hands would be a tray laden with dishes, glasses, etc., from which his whole attention was never diverted, no, not for a second, by the ping-ping of the shot singing about him. He was carrying either tiffin or dinner to his master. This slow-moving figure silhouetted against the sky was apparent from a great distance, and presented an excellent target, but, no matter how exposed the way or how distant the post, no self-respecting Khidmatgar would permit the Sahib whose salt he ate to go without his regular meals.

Those officers who had outstripped their servants, tents, and baggage, lived in acute discomfort until the arrival of their belongings. Of this number was Alex Taylor, in spite of a shake-down in George Chesney's tent and of shirts and socks sent by parcels post from Pindi by his kind friend, Mrs Graham. All things come to an end, however, and so did this. It will be remembered that when ordered to Delhi he had sent his *chaprasi* to his house at Murree, with orders to collect tents, clothes, wine, and stores, and all such things as would be serviceable in camp, to convey them on mules to Pindi, and from Pindi on camels South-

[1] Colonel Sir Edward Thackeray, V.C., R.E., *Two Indian Campaigns*, R.E. Institute, Chatham, 1896, p. 56.

ward to Delhi. He gave these orders, but hardly expected that they would be executed. His servants were hillmen whose homes lay not far from Murree; the five hundred miles of road along which they would have to travel with an unprotected convoy of desirable things lay through disturbed country; it would not have been surprising, therefore, if, after making an honest attempt to obey orders, they had abandoned the enterprise, and, having divided their master's goods between them, had dispersed to their homes. They did nothing of the sort, however. One hot morning early in August, on returning to camp at 9 a.m. after a five hours' round of morning-work, Taylor had the pleasure of seeing his white-robed Bearer standing bowing in the sunshine, and heard the dulcet words, "the Sahib's bath is ready". —no allusion to the journey, or the time that had elapsed since they last met—found his tent pitched, grass-blinds hung in the doorway, flies driven out, a hot bath steaming invitingly on the ground, and changes of linen lying on his bed. He was going to live like a Sahib again. *Tels domestiques sont impayables.*

The Sapper mess, with its row of young officers under the punka lying side by side like sardines saw less of him after this occurrence; he was glad of a little privacy, for, though sociable, he was never gregarious. He dined at mess, however, when his duties permitted. The food put before these hard-worked men would not have lighted a spark in the eye of a gourmet; it was well seasoned, however, with youthful spirits and laughter, some echoes of which still reach us across a gulf of more than half a century.

The party gathered about that pared billiard-table was young; Alex Taylor, aged thirty-one, was its oldest member,[1] while some of the newly-joined subalterns were

[1] The Engineers' Commanding Officer, Colonel Baird Smith, an invalid throughout the occupation of the Ridge, never joined the mess.

in their early twenties. The nicknames they gave each other, the memory of some of which has survived, shed the illumination of kindly satire on the characters of their owners. Two of Taylor's comrades in the Panjab campaign, Wilberforce Greathed and Frederick Maunsell, were of the party. The former, witty and dashing, the youngest of the three Greathed brothers in the camp—the Triumvirate—was best known as the hero of a hazardous ride from Agra to Meerut early in June 1857; during which he ran the gauntlet of eighty miles of "sullen road," through country in open rebellion, which closed up behind him like water, and, finally, reached Meerut, the last Englishman who passed between Aligarh and General Hewitt's headquarters, for four months. On arrival, however, finding that General Wilson—to whom he bore confidential dispatches from Lord Canning and Mr Colvin—had already started for Delhi, he immediately cut across country on a camel, making twenty miles in the dark through a district infested with robbers, hooligans, and mutineers, and rode into the Alipur camp at dawn, alive—to the joy of the friends who had heard of his departure with misgivings (6th June). At the time of the outbreak the E. I. Company had been extending its railway system over the North-West Provinces, and Wilberforce Greathed[1] had been appointed Consulting Engineer to Government on questions connected with railways. No one is a prophet in his own Corps; this important post—far from impressing his juniors at Delhi—taken in conjunction with his quick temper, earned him the sobriquet of the "Insulting Engineer."

James Tennant,[2] mathematician and astronomer, and already a distinguished member of the Indian Survey, was

[1] Major-General Greathed, C.B., R.E. (late Bengal).

[2] Lieutenant-General James Tennant, C.I.E., F.R.S., F.R.A.S., R.E. (late Bengal), late Master of the Mint, Calcutta.

known to the same irreverent company as the "Objector General"; while Edward Thackeray,[1] a lad of twenty-one, fresh from the correct magnificence of England, was immediately dubbed "My Lord." To this brevet-rank Edward Thackeray added the most coveted of all honours, in earnest, before Delhi was taken. On the afternoon of the 16th of September the powder-magazine, which had been recaptured in the morning, was made the objective of determined attack by the rebels; neighbouring sheds containing ammunition caught fire, and finally its roof also. Lieutenant Renny, R.A., climbed on to the latter, from which he *dropped* 10-inch shells—which were handed to him *with fuses burning*—on to the heads of the enemy below. "My Lord," meanwhile (*noblesse oblige*), standing on an enclosure-wall, received water which was handed up to him in cans, and poured it on to the inflammable and smouldering material at his feet; an explosion of powder-barrels, if not of the magazine itself, was immanent at the time, and, while thus uplifted and isolated, he was the target of hot musketry fire. For these acts of resolute gallantry both officers received the decoration of the Victoria Cross—Thackeray on the warm recommendations of his senior brother-officers, Alex Taylor and Frederick Maunsell.

Among the knights of the billiard-table was an eccentric and lovable Highlander—a bagpipe player and artist, *pur sang*—Charles Thomason,[2] son of the great Lieutenant-Governor (1843–1853) of the North-West Provinces. At the time of the outbreak he was in charge of a section of the Western Jumna Canal, and lived the life of a solitary on its unhealthy banks. Never the "glass of fashion," in the *mofussil* he not only allowed his servants to design and manufacture his clothes, but, cherishing personal

[1] Colonel Sir Edward Thackeray, V.C., K.C.B., R.E. (late Bengal).

[2] The late Major-General Charles Thomason, R.E. (late Bengal).

theories regarding the resistance offered by green to the passage of heat-rays, enriched the most exposed parts of his garments—those covering the shoulders and spine—with patches of the required colour, bright green, which the sun gradually mottled with yellow. The bizarre effect of these patchwork clothes—the wearer of which was inevitably named Robinson Crusoe—was anathema to "My Lord," who considered them a disgrace to his Corps, and proposed that a subscription should be raised to give Robinson Crusoe a more conventional outfit. Robinson Crusoe himself enjoyed the joke, smiled indulgently, and continued to protect his spine, scientifically. Soon there was not much to choose between his array and that of his brother-officers, for the time came when most of them wore ragged uniforms, and all were glad to purchase and wear the wardrobes of fallen comrades. The following is a characteristic incident in the life of the same officer. A train, speeding across a vast expanse of Indian desert, gradually came to a standstill. Its few sleepy occupants awoke from their siestas and rubbed their eyes ; they seemed to hear the skirling of pipes ! Were they still dreaming ? They listened, and could not doubt the evidence of their senses ; undeniably, what saluted their ears was the sound of pipes. Surprised, they went to the windows, and looked out. Behold, a hot, limitless desert, a motionless train, and a Scotch guard and a Scotch engine-driver standing entranced outside a first-class carriage, within which, in all his glory, sat Charles Thomason, the pipes to his lips, rocking and swaying to the strains of "A Hundred Pipers and a' and a' " ![1]

[1] He was one of the finest connossieurs of bagpipe music that has ever lived. His incomparable manuscript collection was destroyed at Delhi in 1857, together with the "Grant Pipes," a precious family heirloom. He devoted the leisure of a long life to steadily and patiently repairing this loss, and to increasing his knowledge of a subject which was a hereditary passion. Towards the close of the century he had the satisfaction of publishing the

Last of those of whose nicknames the memory has survived, is Alex Taylor, known to all the Panjab as "Musha" —Musha, the roadmaker, the football player, the ardent fisherman, the hero of jumps high and long, the warm-hearted Irishman, beloved of children, who called him "Mukka, dear," and to the mother of one of whom he wrote shortly after a dangerous reconnaissance to express his deep regret that a local artist had painted a hobby-horse —which should soon reach the nursery—black with yellow spots.[1]

To this short list of the bearers of pseudonyms, given and borne gaily—the "Insulting Engineer," the "Objector General," "My Lord," "Robinson Crusoe," and "Musha," —must be added the names of other members of the billiard-table, with a suggestion of their personalities.

Leading men in the Corps were Lieutenants Frederick Maunsell and George Chesney. The former—who had served with Alex Taylor through the siege of Multan, the battle of Gujarat, and Gilbert's Pursuit—had been present as Adjutant of the Sappers, when Captain Fraser was killed at Meerut, and had had a narrow escape on that occasion. Some hours after the outbreak, the men of two working parties—who had been absent from Captain Fraser's parade—were brought into camp by their officers. They were drawn up by Lieutenant Maunsell, who was now in command, and who proposed to dismiss them in an orderly manner, when a warning "Look out, sir," from his quartermaster, Sergeant-Major Stuart, reached

mass of national music he had put on record and thus rescued from oblivion. His great work, *Coel Mor*, is a veritable storehouse of traditional music, and was the means of reviving the interest taken in bagpipe music all over the world. Wherever the sound of the bagpipes is loved, there the name of Charles Thomason is held in grateful veneration.

[1] The recipient of this horse was his godson, the present Brigadier-General Charles Taylor Robinson, R.A., then a few days old.

his ears, and he saw one of his men fingering his carbine. The order "Fours left, quick march" was promptly given, and before the men realised the object of this manœuvre, they found themselves in the Artillery lines—where the gunners, since the disaster of the 10th, always stood to their guns—and had no choice but to lay down their arms quietly. A number of native officers, who had not participated in the flight of the guilty or frightened Sappers, but had hidden themselves on a neighbouring building, now came up, and —realising that their Adjutant's promptitude had been the salvation of the remnant of their Corps—were profuse in their professions of loyalty and personal devotion to him, protestations which they afterwards converted into deeds. Steadied by their confidence in their Commandant, they performed invaluable service during the siege, being, in fact, the only trained Sappers of the Force, and thus added one more to a long list of examples of the incalculable value of *personality* in the relation of Orientals to their British officers. The natives of India are quick to recognise the hall-marks of the gentle breeding of the West—courage, justice, chivalry—and are prompt and unwavering in their response to them.

A man of different type was George Chesney. Scholar, organiser, and statesman rather than warrior, his facile pen and conciliatory manner made him a *persona grata* to General Wilson—who had succeeded to the command of the Delhi Field Force after the death of Sir Henry Barnard on 5th July—with whom the officer commanding the Engineers, Colonel Baird Smith, was, latterly, scarcely on speaking terms. Much of the success of the siege-operations depended not only on Chesney's power of organisation, but also on his tact. It was he who apportioned their duties to the members of his Corps; they were well aware that the hands within the velvet gloves their Brigade Major seldom doffed were of steel.

Then there was Henry Brownlow, witty and caustic, the officer in charge of the Siege Park; Geneste, the gallant, idle, and able, the actor and linguist of the Corps, who died after the siege from the effects of exposure; and Philip Salkeld, one of the little party of twelve—ladies among them—who, escaping from Delhi on the 12th of May, crossed the Jumna, and, in spite of the intense heat of the sun's rays, and the hostility of the country people by whom they were stoned and robbed, walked all the way to Meerut, where they arrived, wounded, barefooted, famished, and almost naked, having endured unimaginable fatigues and privations. To the world he lives as one of the heroes who blew in the Kashmir Gate—thus opening the way by which the 3rd Column, followed by Artillery, entered Delhi—and laid down their lives in the act. With the name of Salkeld is associated that of Duncan Home, the leader of that explosion-party, who survived, by some miracle, only to lose his life a few weeks later at Malaghar, by the accidental explosion of a mine.

Nor must the two Walkers—Edmund and James, the latter known as "Bombay" Walker[1]—be forgotten. Long hours of work in heat and rain by night and day bore their fruit; cholera and dysentery ravaged the camp, and one of their earliest victims was Edmund Walker, who died of cholera after five hours' illness. "Young in years, but ripe in varied experience, an accomplished soldier, a gallant gentleman, and a friend, endeared to his brother-officers by many noble qualities, his premature death was felt as a general private sorrow and as a severe public loss." So writes his friend, "My Lord," who was occupying the next bed to his when he was suddenly stricken.

Bombay Walker was put *hors de combat* on the ill-

[1] The late General Walker, C.B., F.R.S., Surveyor-General of India (1878–1883).

omened 14th of July, on which day the Force lost the services of Neville Chamberlain also. The circumstances under which he was wounded were not only characteristic of the man but of the type of work on which all the members of the Corps were engaged. They are thus described by his Chief, Colonel Baird Smith: "Having been directed to blow open the gate of a sarai occupied in force by the enemy, Lieutenant Walker could only obtain a number of cartridges from the nearest field-battery as the powder needful for the purpose. Carrying these cartridges himself in full view of the enemy, under a heavy fire, he was fortunate enough to succeed in lodging them against the gate without being hit. He lit the match and retired, but, seeing after a time that the port-fire had burned out, he advanced again, and re-lit it; again it failed. He then procured a musket, moved out to the vicinity of the gate and fired into the powder, exploding it at once, and blowing away the woodwork effectually. The attacking party at once rushed in, and slew the whole of the enemy inside. After this successful shot, Lieutenant Walker received a very severe gun-shot wound in the thigh. Before he had recovered from this wound, cholera supervened, and his services were lost to the army . . . just at a time when his excellent qualifications as a military surveyor, his clear intellect, and cool courage would have made his aid invaluable."[1] Alex Taylor—in whose opinion "Bombay Walker was the ablest all-round officer in the Corps"—was amongst those who had the greatest reason to deplore his loss, for his qualifications, both as a military surveyor and as a cool soldier, were precisely those he most needed in the subordinates with whose help he was elaborating a Project of Attack.

Nor must Taylor's former subalterns on the Road be

[1] Thackeray, *op. cit.* (*Two Campaigns*), p. 42.

forgotten : Lieutenants Julius George Medley—"Jules"—Gulliver, Hovenden, and William Edmund Warrand. The latter lost his arm while superintending the construction of a Battery shortly before the siege-proper began. His friend, Colonel Kendal Coghill, who was then Adjutant of the 1st Bengal Fusiliers, has described the circumstances under which this unhappy event occurred. "Warrand and I were schoolfellows," he writes. "I was his fag at Cheltenham, and we shared a bedroom there for years ; but we never met after we had left school until one day in the siege, when I dropped by chance into a new Battery which he was forming under heavy fire. I kept watch for him on the enemy's Battery, while he cleared an embrasure of the fascines which closed it. He and a sergeant peered through to see that it opened straight on to the desired point, when a shrapnel, entering, carried off both their arms—they were leaning in the opening. As I was helping him out of the Battery my own regimental call and the "double" sounded, and, as I was Adjutant, I had to fall in, so left him under shelter, and sent up help for him. I did not see him again for some time afterwards, as the fighting was very heavy for some days, and no one could leave the front. When it became lighter, I called at the hospital, and inquired after an officer who had lost his arm—I did not know then who it was—and was told that the hospital was pretty full, and contained more than one patient who answered that description, but that I might look round and see if I could recognise my friend. I found him, and chatted a few minutes at his cot. When I was leaving, he said 'Whom have I to thank?' When he heard my name, he exclaimed : 'Why, not Kendal Coghill?' To my affirmative, I added in reply, 'What is your name?' and he said 'Warrand.' 'Not Edmund Warrand?' I cried. And so the old friendship was renewed!"

Fulford, who died some months later at Calcutta from

the effects of exposure, was another of the notabilities of the Corps; so also were Tandy, who was killed on the day of the assault, and Edward Jones, of whom Alex Taylor writes on the 18th July—"This morning, Jones of our regiment was shot through both legs by a ball; one leg was utterly smashed below the knee, and a large piece of the calf of the other leg carried away. One leg has been amputated—under chloroform—below the knee, and he is now *very comfortable.*" Poor Ned Jones, lying maimed, on a string bed, with the thermometer standing at over 100° F. in a tent the inner walls of which were black with flies! It is a relief to know that he was safe in his grave a few hours later. "It was an unhappy shot," Taylor continues; "he was alone on the plain, 1100 yards from the place, and a very few guns were being fired at the time. We have had thousands of workmen walking over the same ground and under a much heavier fire, without a single casualty."

The shadow of the Angel of Death fell across the diners at the billiard-table, and, determined though they were to be jolly at any price, they could not ignore its presence. Alex Taylor wrote to Dan Robinson to ask how wills should be drawn up, and when the forms were received they all busied themselves with will-making; but even this not without hilarity.[1]

Such were some of the young roadmaker's Corps-companions in the camp then before Delhi; men with whom it was an honour to be associated. "Of the wonderful heroism, the consummate patience, the gallant actions then performed, the grievous sufferings then endured, no words

[1] Taylor to Robinson, 18th July: "Thanks for yours without date. I am sending the form for wills to Bombay Walker. Poor little fellow, he takes it very well. . . . His colour is good as of old, and his eye twinkles not one bit the less."

can speak in language of sufficient admiration," writes the historian of the Mutiny. Truly no words of praise seem commensurate with the occasion to those who look back on that drama of heroic endeavour and endurance, and reap its fruits; the brave men, however, who were the actors on that stage, took the suffering, the "rough and tumble," of their circumstances very simply, as part of the day's work—"incidenti del mestiére," as the King of Italy said when one of his subjects shot at him.

It will be well, perhaps, to say a word here on the normal nature and functions of a Sapper Corps. Such a Corps is a military unit, organised for the especial purpose of executing works of military engineering in time of war. It consists of specially trained officers, non-commissioned officers and privates; on the former devolves the work of skilled superintendence, training, and military leading; the latter are not only disciplined soldiers, but experts in the art of the military blacksmith, military carpenter, etc. Its officers and men alike are proficients in the science and art of military engineering, adepts in the erection and maintenance of Batteries, the making of trenches, breastworks, etc., and in the use and making of powder-bags, fuses, fascines, gabions, sand-bags, and other siege accessories. It is equipped with all the tools and materials necessary to the execution of the functions for the sake of which it exists. Such a complete military unit functions automatically under normal conditions. The conditions under which the Sappers worked at Delhi, however, were abnormal, so greatly had their numbers been reduced by mutiny, and so inadequately were they equipped.

The nucleus of the Sapper Corps in the Delhi camp was formed by Lieutenant Maunsell's Roorkee Sappers, part of whose history has been told already. The rest of their story

must be told here. On the outbreak at Meerut, some five hundred Sappers from Roorkee were dispatched thither by request, under the command of Captain Fraser, Frederick Maunsell being Adjutant. Starting in ignorance of what had occurred and travelling by boat along the Ganges Canal, they rowed past many corpses of *natives*, who had evidently been clubbed by hooligans. On the second day an overseer, passing by rapidly in a buggy, turned in his seat to shout: "They're cuttin' throats in Meerut like mad, and burnin' 'ouses."[1] On arrival, they heard what had occurred, and marched into the station between the Carabineers, the 60th Rifles, and the Artillery standing to their guns—a sinister reception. Two Sapper Companies were sent to the outskirts of the station to erect defences, the rest of the Corps remained in camp.

As the garrison at Meerut had good reason to distrust the loyalty of dark men, it was judged wise to remove all ammunition from the Sapper camp, and to place it under the protection of British bayonets. The position of these Native Sappers was most trying: the men of their own colour in the station had mutinied, and they were well aware that they themselves were watched by armed and excited British soldiers, who under the circumstances were naturally both suspicious and alert. To remove their ammunition was equivalent to disarming them; once disarmed, they were helpless; they objected strongly to the measure therefore, and determined to meet it with desperate opposition. Lieutenant Maunsell, being aware of the feeling of his men, wrote to warn Captain Fraser.[2] The latter, however, determined to put the design into effect, and, when his men protested, replied angrily, with the result that they rushed on him as the

[1] Thackeray, *op. cit.* (*Two Campaigns*), p. 4.

[2] Lieutenant Maunsell's letter was found in Captain Fraser's pocket. The death of the latter gave Alex Taylor his Captaincy.

ammunition carts moved out of the Sapper lines, and shot him, together with a native Sergeant. Lieutenant Maunsell escaped into a neighbouring building, and all the Sappers, innocent and guilty alike, dispersed, many of them escaping either to Delhi, or to their headquarters at Roorkee, where they told the story of Fraser's murder, adding, *as a fact*, the horror, *fear* of which had driven them to mutiny, namely, that the Europeans had opened on them with grape after the revolt, and had virtually destroyed the Corps. On hearing this many of the Roorkee Sappers fled to Delhi.

Lieutenant Maunsell's presence of mind has been recorded already ; it saved the remainder of the Corps, which he afterwards brought to Delhi, and commanded throughout the whole of the operations. This young officer was convinced that this disastrous outbreak was the result of panic rather than of treachery, for there had been no symptoms of discontent in the Corps until mutiny had flamed out on the withdrawal of its ammunition ; its members, moreover, who doubtless had long been subjected to the persuasion of traitors, could easily have massacred their officers, to whom they stood in a proportion of more than fifty to one, during the journey to Meerut. He therefore allowed two of his non-commissioned officers to follow their comrades into Delhi, in order to induce those who had committed no outrage and were well disposed at heart to return to their posts, under assurance of pardon. The attempt made by these courageous volunteers failed. One of them, who belonged to a distinguished family, and was held in exceptionally high esteem by his comrades, was allowed by the rebels to rejoin the Corps ; the other, they condemned to death. The latter—a brother of the native Sergeant who fell at Captain Fraser's side—was actually tied to the mouth of a cannon from which he was destined to be blown, when there came an alarm and

a rush to arms, under cover of which his friends aided him to effect his escape. He afterwards rose to a high position in our service.

The difficulty of these Sappers' position throughout the siege has never been fully appreciated. The loyal remnant of a disloyal regiment, they were the only Sepoy Corps in the camp which was allowed to retain their full equipment of arms. But in spite of this mark of confidence they were well aware that the trust reposed in them by their white comrades was not absolutely whole-hearted, and that the members of native regiments of untarnished record, such as the Guides and Charles Reid's Gurkhas, looked on them askance. And not only were they subjected to mortifications from their allies, but also to the taunts and tempting promises of their brothers—*bhai*—within the city. That they came through this ordeal intact was very largely due—as has been said already—to the support they received from the sympathy and confidence of their Commandant, to whom most of them were personally known.

But if there were some in camp who regarded them with doubtful eyes, there were none who hesitated to avail themselves of their services. They were the only fully-trained assistants at the disposal of the Engineers throughout the operations. Under the direction of officers, they guided working parties, regulated the use of tools, powder-bags, etc., superintended the erection of Batteries, breastworks, etc., and the demolition of houses, bridges, and walls; some of them accompanied every sortie of importance; and to them was entrusted the hazardous honour of blowing-in the Kashmir Gate on the day of assault—perhaps the most dramatic of all the heroic acts performed during the siege.

This Corps—the numbers of which quickly fell through death, wounds, and sickness, to only a hundred men—was an

organised unit of many years' standing, and, though wholly inadequate, both in numbers and equipment, to grapple with the great work in hand, formed the trained nucleus of the Engineer Park. It was afterwards supplemented by a Sapper detachment which had served with the Movable Column; by eight hundred Mazbi Sikhs who had worked on Alex Taylor's road, been armed and slightly trained by Lieutenant Gulliver, and sent "in the rough," by John Lawrence to the camp; and by some six hundred Pioneers, brought from Roorkee by Henry Brownlow. Their services were further supplemented by some one thousand local road-coolies—wholly untrained—who did such heavy unskilled work as digging, cutting down trees, etc., and who, though unarmed and unaccustomed to warfare, worked well and steadily under fire.

The Sapper Corps at Delhi was an all-important but subordinate fraction of the Engineer Brigade. It worked, as did the whole of the said Brigade, under the command of its Colonel, Baird Smith, whose orders were transmitted to his subordinates by the regimental Brigade-Major, George Chesney. The collection and manipulation of the siege-material and the training of the men destined to handle it under fire was entrusted to Lieutenant Henry Brownlow, Director of the Park, who, though he had seen no military service, had done distinguished civil work as a Canal officer, and now applied himself to his new task with energy and ability. It was his duty to fashion John Lawrence's untrained Mazbis into reliable and competent Sappers, and so enormously to expand the Engineer Park as to bring it into proper relation, not only to the work in hand, but to the all-important task it would presently be called on to undertake.

Foremost amongst the Sapper non-commissioned officers who did the whole Brigade yeoman's service were Sergeant-

Major Stuart[1] and Conductor James Smith.[2] The former was a tower of strength ; his readiness had saved Lieutenant Maunsell's life at Meerut. He kept a steady eye on the discipline of the Corps, which might otherwise have been shaken by recent mutiny and by the accession of so many untrained and turbulent recruits. Conductor Smith came to Delhi with the Engineer Park from Roorkee, and had charge of it throughout the subsequent operations, during which his professional ability was an asset of value to the whole Corps. The Engineer officers, with whom he was a prime favourite, relied implicitly on his collaboration ; they knew that they had only to find the "Miscreant"—as they called him, on account of his queer lowering wrinkled face and odd smile—to tell him what men and tools they wanted, and when, and their needs would be accurately and punctually satisfied.

The work of providing the Corps with sufficient siege-material was enormous. Gabions, for instance, were used in immense numbers in the erection of the Batteries with which the Ridge and the approaches to the camp came to be studded before the end of August. Ten thousand gabions were stored in the Engineer Park when the siege-proper commenced. These were all made locally ; parties of Pioneers, directed generally by a non-commissioned Sapper officer, were sent out daily and nightly to cut brushwood, frequently under fire ; the material collected was then prepared and fashioned—still under the direction of non-commissioned Sapper officers—into the required forms. As at Multan, large areas in the British camp sometimes presented the somewhat anomalous spectacle of an army apparently busily engaged in basket-making. The scale on

[1] Afterwards given a Lieutenancy ; he entered the Staff Corps, and rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

[2] Afterwards promoted to a veteran Lieutenancy.

which fascines were made may be gathered from the fact that fifteen hundred camels were employed nightly during the siege in carrying them to the sites of the Batteries.[1]

The Corps was provided with a piece of land, which formed the base of its operations; magazines, for powder and tools, were erected on it, and on it the regiment gathered for work, drill, and instruction. It was of a size serviceable for engineering experiments—the construction of divers forms of Battery, for instance—for the lading and unlading of elephants, camels, bullocks,[2] and mules; also for the disposition of tools which, on occasion, were laid out on it in such a manner that they could be taken up by large working parties in an orderly manner.

The British officers leading this Corps were twenty in number at the commencement of the operations on the Ridge; but, though this figure subsequently rose to twenty-seven, there were only nineteen officers fit for duty on the day of the assault, and on the following day this number was reduced by deaths and wounds to nine. Had the siege been prolonged there would soon have been no Engineer officers available for duty. During the whole operations four Engineer officers were killed and sixteen wounded, and there were five casualties among the nine Infantry officers employed as Assistant Field Engineers. Thus the total casualties in the Engineer Brigade amounted to twenty-five officers out of about forty.[3] "Of the forty-five non-commissioned officers who left Roorkee on the 14th of May," writes Sir Edward Thackeray, who was one of the Roorkee-Meerut party, "ten died at Delhi during the first six weeks of the siege, and on the 26th of July we had hardly any fit for

[1] Thackeray, *op. cit.* (*Two Campaigns*), p. 73.

[2] Each of the guns placed in Battery towards dawn on 7th September, was drawn by twenty pairs of bullocks.

[3] *R. E. Prof. Papers*, vol. xxiii. p. 89.

duty."[1] These figures testify to the exposed and dangerous character of the work these men were called on to perform. No part of the Delhi Field Force was idle; it contained, however, no more hardly worked body than the Engineer Brigade, the members of which were not only soldiers, but engineers, and whose double work was ceaseless. "I am never off duty," wrote Taylor—with evident enjoyment.

When the British army first took possession of the Ridge—the one idea of the rebels was to wipe out their enemies, their great numerical preponderance investing this intention with the colours of hope. They swept against it therefore in large numbers—ten, fifteen and twenty thousand at a time, their attacks following each other in such rapid succession that the British Force was sometimes kept under arms for days and nights at a stretch. The Engineers' first duty, therefore, was to endeavour to render the British front impregnable. This was gradually done by the erection of batteries and their accessories — approaches, traverses, epaulements, powder-magazines, and bullet-proof shelters for men off duty; breastworks and abattis were also made, and trenches.

The mutineers learned in time, however, that to remove the British army from the Ridge, to which it was clinging like a limpet, was a task beyond their power; and presently it dawned on them that the British Force had no intention of attacking for the present—that it was standing on the defensive, while it waited for reinforcements. There was something alarming in this attitude of quiet expectancy. They then realised that they must change their tactics, that their proper course of action was twofold—to engage the British Force on the Ridge, and to send large bodies of men

[1] Thackeray, *op. cit.* (*Two Campaigns*), p. 60.

to its rear, with the object of separating it from its base and of intercepting both supplies and reinforcements. Had they acted consistently on this policy things must have gone ill with us, for their superior numbers would have enabled them so to enlarge the area covered by the struggle that it would have been materially impossible for the British Force to maintain the conflict. Fortunately, however, their efforts in this direction were intermittent; whatever their policy, their practice degenerated into blind striking at the defenders of the Ridge. Rear attacks, sometimes on a large scale, were added, however, to those on the British front.

These new tactics forced new lines of defence on the Engineers. They fortified the rear and South-West of the camp, cleared gardens, demolished the bridges on the Western Jumna Canal and also the buildings in Sabzi Mandi, which gave shelter to the mutineers and obstructed a clear view of the near reaches of the Grand Trunk Road.[1] This was not done without hard fighting in houses and serais, in the course of which such incidents occurred as those which put Neville Chamberlain and "Bombay Walker" *hors de combat.*

Hearing that the mutineers intended to flood the rampart ditch, a proceeding which would have increased the difficulty of the future assault, the Engineers destroyed the aqueduct by which water was brought into Delhi from the North-West, and also all the bridges across the Najafgarh Jhil Canal, with one exception only—the Azadpur bridge, which was kept for the convenience of foraging parties; it was, however, mined, and permanently defended by a cavalry picquet to which an Engineer officer with Sappers was always attached, in case its demolition should become imperative. The latter remained at this post for forty-eight hours, and accompanied the patrolling Cavalry to report on

[1] June 29–30, night.

the surrounding inundations and on the depth of water in the Canal. As this duty involved a ride of twelve miles through slush and water, and a return to a tent in which flies by day and mosquitoes by night effectually precluded sleep, it is easy to accept George Medley's assurance that the Azadpur picquet was not a favourite post.[1]

The following are typical entries in the Sapper day-book :—"In order to prevent the entry of water into Delhi, and to render the masonry bed of the Poolchudder Aqueduct impracticable for guns, Lieutenant Stewart with twenty Sappers proceeded at 4 p.m. to effect a demolition by gunpowder."

"Lieutenant Thackeray, with ten Sappers and one hundred Pioneers with elephants, continued the destruction of enclosures round the Sabzi Mandi post."[2]

"A small party of Sappers under Lieutenant Jones with elephants cleared an opening through walls and trees to the right front of the General's mound, so as to lay open about three hundred or four hundred yards of the Grand Trunk Road to the fire of the guns of the mound."

"During the day Lieutenants Greathed and Fulford, with thirty Pioneers and thirty Sappers . . . destroyed the Shalimar, Badli, and Shumapur bridges."[3]

"Thirty Sappers and thirty Pioneers, under Lieutenants Chesney, Champain, and Geneste, proceeded with a strong column to demolish the Bussie bridge."[4]

"Lieutenants Stewart and Carnegie, with twenty Sappers and thirty Pioneers, dismantled two bridges between Delhi and Alipur, piling the timber superstructure on the bank (this was done in every instance) and levelling the pier and abutments to the water's edge."[5]

[1] See Medley, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
[2] June 28–29, night.
[3] July 6–7, night.
[4] July 9, night.
[5] July, night.

Enough has been said to suggest the character of the service of the Engineer Brigade during the twelve weeks which separated the 8th of June from the commencement of the siege-proper, 7th September. One word, however, must be added concerning the organisation of its daily work. This was so arranged as to combine the greatest results with the least fatigue. Lieutenant Medley explains that as "the principal part of an Engineer's work is invariably executed at night, with the twofold object of secrecy and safety . . . the working parties were sent down at dusk, under their several officers, and worked away until dawn, when they were marched back to camp." "At 1 p.m.," he adds, "when we were all at tiffin, the order-book usually came round, and we all learned who would be required during the next twenty-four hours. At four o'clock there was an early dinner for the officers on duty, who then went away with their respective working parties—some to make new breastworks, and some to lay and construct fresh Batteries, or to clear away the cover near the posts, or to strengthen the posts themselves, or to cut brushwood for making those valuable auxiliaries to the Engineer—gabions and fascines."

The programme traced in the order-book was based—(1) on the reports made by Engineer officers as they came off duty; (2) the requisitions of officers commanding posts, who had recourse to the Engineers for professional aid; and (3) the recommendations of the Directing Engineer —Alex Taylor, after the 5th of July—who had, of course, the largest oversight of the general field of operations. Julius G. Medley speaks with gratitude and respect of the orderly and excellent manner in which the Corps' work was arranged by its Brigade Major, George Chesney, particularly during the actual siege in September. "Severe as was the duty," he writes, "no officer was unnecessarily worked. An admirable routine was preserved, by which all

knew when and where their presence would be required. This contributed not a little to the rapid and complete success of the subsequent arduous operations."[1]

The background of this special Corps-activity was the ordinary life of an army outnumbered, but confident; kept on the defensive by wise generalship, though constantly attacked and longing to reply. The call of bugles and the gallant fanfare of trumpets were the hourly music of the camp, and one of its amusements was to watch the enemy swarm from the city only to be driven back.

The following entry in the journal kept throughout the operations by Sir Charles Reid—who held Hindu Rao's House, the usual objective of the enemy's attacks—gives a vivid idea of the stress and strain of that life of hand-to-hand fighting and constantly parried attack. It runs: "August 3rd. The engagement commenced at sunset on the 1st, lasted the whole night, and until 4 p.m. yesterday. The mutineers tried hard to get in our rear. They managed to erect a bridge across the Canal at Bussie, but it was carried away by the flood; their guns were for some time left on one side, and their Infantry and Cavalry on the other. This report was sent me by the General about 4 p.m. on the 1st. About half an hour later, I saw the whole force returning—guns, mortars, etc.; it was joined by about 3000 or 4000 from the city, and the whole force, in all about 20,000, came straight at my position. I was prepared for them. The General sent up my supports, sharp, as he always does, and we commenced work. The 'Sammy House' was attacked first by about 5000. At this time I had only 150 of Coke's men in it, under Travers, and 50 of the Guides. I at once sent them reinforcements from the Rifles, and the 61st (Queen's).

At dusk the enemy brought up their guns, supported by

[1] Medley, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

a very large force, and then commenced the sharpest fire I have ever heard on the whole of my position. They were very desperate indeed. Before midnight we had driven them back a dozen times. The firing then ceased for about a quarter of an hour, and I began to think I had got rid of my friends; but, shortly after, the moon rose, for which they apparently had been waiting, and up came fresh troops from the city, bugling and shouting on all sides. I passed the word from right to left to allow the enemy to come up close, and to keep a dead silence in the ranks. On came the enemy with their light guns, up the Grand Trunk Road, as also up the Kishanganj Road. My three light guns which were in Battery across the road were all loaded with grape, and when the enemy were close up, they opened. Round after round, with volleys of musketry from the Sammy House, had the effect of driving them back again. Still, there they were, within four hundred yards of me, making preparations for another attack, whilst their light guns kept up one continuous blaze, as also their heavy guns from the Mori and Burn Bastions. This sort of thing went on the whole night: 900 men against at least 20,000! My troops behaved admirably; all were steady and well in hand; and I never for one moment had any doubt about the results.

At daybreak more troops were seen in the Kishanganj buildings, and on they came again at the Sammy House. I accordingly sent Sir E. Campbell with a Company of the 60th Rifles to reinforce the troops at that post. At 8 a.m. they gave us time to get a little breakfast, but before 9 o'clock on they came again, and it was not before 5 p.m. last evening that I had the satisfaction of seeing them in full retreat, guns and all. Thus ended the great attack, being number twenty-four on my position! . . . I have had no return as yet of killed and wounded, and I dread looking at

the reports; the enemy's loss must have been very severe. The escapes I have had are perfectly wonderful! People look at me after every engagement, and say 'What, are you still unwounded?' Thank God for thus sparing me! I hope to keep my old head on my shoulders for some time yet! Anyhow, until I have seen the Imperial City fall! These persevering villains seem determined to wear us out; our spies say they are coming out again; all ready for them!"[1]

Some sorties, however, under certain conditions of hour, lighting, and distance, had an almost idyllic effect. This is Colonel Baird Smith's description of what he saw from the Ridge of a gallant expedition in which we captured four guns near Ludlow Castle, all the rebel Artillerymen—who stood splendidly to their guns—being killed at their posts. "By about quarter to four a.m. all the troops had assembled," he writes. "It was a beautifully moonlit and starlit night, perfectly still and quiet, except for the hum of a crowd that rose and fell on the fresh breeze. . . . At about quarter past four the Column moved on, and continued to march on undisturbed by a single shot till in the immediate vicinity of Ludlow Castle. Then, all at once, rose a loud burst of musketry, which increased steadily in intensity for some time, then decreased, and in less than an hour had almost died away." In that hour the enemy lost 250 men killed and four guns, our loss being one officer and nineteen men killed, seven officers and eighty-five men wounded, and five men missing. "The return to camp was a stirring sight," writes Lord Roberts; "the captured guns were brought home in triumph, pushed along by the soldiers, all madly cheering, and the horses ridden by men carrying their muskets with bayonets fixed."[2]

[1] Sir Charles Reid's Diary.

[2] Roberts, *op. cit.*, i. p. 207.

Such was the warfare in which the Delhi Field Force was involved.

The subject of the following pages will be the work done by Alex Taylor and the members of his Corps during the siege and capture of Delhi, and the phase preliminary to them. The reader will remember, however, that the strand of history followed is but a thread—an important one, certainly, but still only a thread—in the noble many-storied design woven by the manhood of the army encamped before Delhi in 1857. It is part of a web of Homeric warfare—the gallant hand-to-hand struggle of brave men, outnumbered and isolated in the midst of the teeming populations of a tropical continent, who, in spite of disabling fatigue, heat, and disease, succeeded in floating the British flag—which Clive, Lake, and a thousand heroes, had taught India to respect—from the towers and pinnacles of the fortresses of the Great Mughal.

CHAPTER VII

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PLAN OF ATTACK

After this long digression, intended to put the reader *au courant* with the topography of the place and with the general character of the life in the camp before Delhi, and more especially in the Sapper camp, we will return to the immediate subject of this work—the special services of Alex Taylor.

As has been seen, he arrived in camp early in the night of June the 27th; he did not report himself, however, until the 29th, when his predecessor Major Laughton left, but spent Sunday, the 28th, in familiarising himself with the ground and personnel of future operations. On taking over the command, he energetically pressed on all defence-work, and drew up a Plan of Attack,[1] which seems to have been a variation of an earlier plan made by Hodson and three young Engineers—Lieutenants Greathed, Chesney, and Maunsell. According to this Plan, the whole force was to be divided into three Columns, two being designed to enter Delhi by the Kashmir and Lahore Gates respectively, while the third was to attempt an escalade.

[1] "The attack is to be made to-morrow morning, an hour before day-break. God grant it may be successful. Our guns are too far off to be dangerous. We are replying with 18-pounders to their 24- and 32-pounders. It must be done with the bayonet after all."—Sir Charles Reid's Diary, 2nd July.

This Project, which was exceedingly risky, was countermanded at the last moment by General Barnard, greatly to its author's disappointment,—"we might have been into Delhi two days ago, had the General not hesitated; he does not know how contemptible is the enemy," he wrote in a private letter dated 4th of July. This opinion was that also of Colonel Baird Smith,[1] who arrived in camp on 3rd July, took over the command of the Corps, and immediately prepared a third Plan of Attack, which was on much the same lines as its two predecessors, and, like them, was never translated into action. "While decision on the subject of the proposed attack was pending," he writes, "we had several severe actions with the enemy, in which our losses were very material to so small a force as ours, and it was finally resolved that the risks were too great. I did not concur with this view at the moment, but after the action of the 14th July I, too, came to the conclusion that the time had passed for a successful assault, and when General Wilson succeeded General Reed (17th July)[2] I told

[1] This officer's career had gained him a high reputation. He had served with distinction through the two Sikh campaigns, but, not having been with the Multan army, had had no siege experience. Both before and after the Sikh Wars he was employed on the Ganges Canal. In 1856 he was appointed Director General of Works and Superintendent of the Canals of the North-West Provinces. The Delhi Canals were within his jurisdiction; he was familiar, therefore, with the general configuration of the ground on which the troops were operating. The dispatch of the bulk of the Roorkee Sappers to Meerut on the outbreak of the Mutiny had left Roorkee itself ill-defended; Colonel Baird Smith, who was in command there, immediately organised its white population (some 100 clerks and a few trained soldiers) into a serviceable force, and put the Station into so efficient a state of defence that though most of the Sappers left to protect it deserted, there was no massacre: the waves of mutiny swept through the place, leaving its European population unscathed.

[2] Commanders of the Delhi Field Force in 1857:—Sir George Anson, died of cholera at Karnal, 27th May; Sir H. Barnard, died of cholera, camp before Delhi, 5th July; General Reed, invalided, camp before Delhi, 17th July; General Archdale Wilson.

him so. Looking back now, from the ground of actual experience, I believe that, if we had assaulted between the 4th and the 14th, we should have taken the place. But the same retrospect equally satisfies me that no evil consequences resulted from the delay."[1]

The fact would seem to be that the army swept against Delhi by the whirlwind of John Lawrence's energy might have attacked successfully had it been able to fling itself on its quarry in May, as was intended, when the bulk of the inhabitants of the city were loyal, and before the mutineers who had invaded it had been reinforced by their brethren from North, South, East, and West. It is even possible that success might have crowned an assault made in June. But it seems arithmetically demonstrable that an army as small as Sir Henry Barnard's must have been annihilated had it been involved in determined street-fighting in a city of the size of Delhi, after its inhabitants had been involved in the guilt of their rulers and soldiery, and were well aware that the sack of their houses must follow British success.

Most serious were the political conditions which obtained after the abandonment of all prospect of a speedy assault. Nothing was known of the state of affairs to the South, except that an impervious belt of mutiny separated Delhi from Calcutta. The capital of the Mughals was the centre to which mutineers hurried from stations separated from it by hundreds of miles. The composition of the great bands of Sepoys who marched into it was such as to suggest sinister conclusions: they hailed from Nimach, Kotah, Gwalior, Jhansi, Rohilkhand, and elsewhere, and represented large rebellious areas; but where were the regiments from Lucknow, and Oudh, from Cawnpore and Agra? Their absence witnessed to centres other than Delhi in which

[1] Colonel H. M. Vibart, *Richard Baird Smith*: A. Constable, Westminster, 1897, pp. 41–2.

white men were waging a desperate and unequal conflict. It seemed only too likely, therefore, that the relieving Force moving from Calcutta to Delhi would be deviated from its course by the necessity of relieving garrisons on its flanks. Immediate assistance from the South faded, therefore, from the region of things possible.

It was not from Lord Canning, but from John Lawrence, that the Delhi Field Force could hope for assistance. But neither were the Panjab tidings reassuring. It had been found necessary to disarm almost every Sepoy Corps in the Province; this precaution had not laid the danger, however: these disarmed Corps were succeeding in re-arming themselves, and had broken into mutiny and massacre at the critical posts of Lahore[1] and Peshawar.[2] The loyalty of faithful Native Chiefs was showing signs of overstrain. Beyond the frontier lay Afghanistan—a disaster at Delhi would give the Afghans the opportunity for which they looked.

What of the army thus threatened both from the North and South? Its position is admirably summarised by its Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Barnard, in a letter written on Sunday, the 28th June—the day spent by Alex Taylor in acquainting himself with the position on his arrival in camp—"*The whole thing is too gigantic for the force brought against it*,"[3] he says.

Is it strange that under these circumstances there should have been some who counselled, not merely the abandonment of an aggressive policy, but of the Ridge itself? But if there were those who advocated this retrograde movement, the idea was abhorrent to the Force as a whole. Among its most stubborn opponents were the Colonel of the Engineer Brigade and his Second in Command, Alex

[1] 30th July. [2] 28th August.
[3] Kaye and Malleson, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 422.

Taylor, "About the time of General Reed's leaving camp" (17th July), writes the former, "it was in contemplation to abandon our position before Delhi, to withdraw the army to the left bank of the Jumna, and, resuming our communications with the Lower Provinces, to await reinforcements. . . . On the day on which General Wilson assumed command (18th July), I took the opportunity of his sending for me to consult with me on the whole question of our position, to urge, in the most earnest terms I could employ, the absolute necessity of holding the grip we then had on Delhi like grim death, not receding a foot from the ground we held, and I cheerfully undertook the responsibility of making the position tenable against any assault. I pointed out that, even as we were, we had never met the enemy except to rout him entirely and utterly; that our communications, though exposed undoubtedly, had never been seriously impaired; that every want we had was abundantly supplied; that the health of the troops was wonderfully good; and that I could not think of a single sound reason for retrograding. Against such a step were many excellent arguments. All India would at once believe that we retreated because we were beaten, and in such circumstances as ours such a belief would be equivalent to the severest defeat we could sustain. We must abandon our communication with the Panjab, and cease to act as a covering force to the Province from which all the reinforcements we could hope for must be drawn. We must again fight our way to Delhi, against reinvigorated enemies, increased in numbers and spirits, when we determined to renew the siege; and we must cease to perform the incalculably important function of checkmating the entire strength of the revolt, as we were doing, by drawing every regiment of Cavalry and Infantry, and every Battery of artillery, as soon as they mutinied, straight to Delhi, and thus saving

our small and defenceless posts from being overpowered by them."

General Wilson held the same views—indeed, they were those of every strong and able man in the camp. On the 30th July he wrote to Mr Colvin, the Governor of the North-West Provinces: "It is my firm determination to hold my present position, and to resist every attack to the last. The enemy are numerous, and may possibly break through our entrenchments and overwhelm us; but this Force will die at its post.[1] Luckily the enemy have no head and no method, and we hear that dissensions are breaking out among them. Reinforcements are coming up under Nicholson; if we can hold on till they arrive, we shall be secure. I am making every possible arrangement to secure the safe defence of our position."[2]

The Delhi Field Force stood, therefore, on the defensive; protected its line of communication with its base, the Panjab; and awaited the arrival of the Siege Trains ordered early in the month, and the reinforcements promised by John Lawrence.

The Engineer Brigade, meanwhile, not only strengthened the British position in the many ways already described, but prepared vigorously for the coming bombardment and assault.

Its activity with regard to the future took four directions: (1) The collection of siege-material, and its conversion into the forms required. (2) The training of the men who would be required to manipulate this material under trying circumstances—under fire probably—and at a critical moment. (3) The ordering of a Siege Train (towards the middle of

[1] The Force to which General Wilson refers was small, not 4500 *effective* cavalry and infantry.

[2] Letter quoted by Sir W. Lee-Warner, G.C.S.I., *Fortnightly*, March 1913, "Archdale Wilson, Captor of Delhi."

July) from the two great arsenals of the Panjab—Ferozpur and Phillaur. (4) The preparation of a reliable and carefully tested Plan of Attack.

Reference has already been made to the manner in which the first three of these requirements were met. It was on the evocation of the fourth, however, that Alex Taylor especially bent his powers, and we will now direct our attention to this phase of his activities.

It had always been evident that the assault must be delivered on the city's Northern and North-Western fronts —the fronts which contained the Water, Kashmir, Mori, Kabul, and Lahore Bastions, and the Kashmir, Kabul, and Lahore Gates—and were protected by the Ridge and river from rear and left-flank attacks. It was equally clear that the weight of the attack *should* fall, if possible, on the North-Eastern extremity of the Northern front, for between and behind the Kashmir and Water Bastions lay wide open spaces which extended, without much interruption, from the city wall to the Palace and to the Eastern end of the Chandni Chaouk, and were protected from left-flank attack by the river. These spaces near the ramparts were strategically invaluable—being suitable for the orderly re-formation of troops after the storming of the breaches. An obvious and apparently insuperable objection, however, seemed to put an attack on this quarter out of the question. Whereas the guns on the Ridge could play on the Mori and cover an advance against it, the North-Eastern extremity of the Northern ramparts was far out of their range; the ground which separated the Ridge from the Water Bastion was in the enemy's hands, and the force at the General's disposal was insufficient to enable him to occupy it. For this reason the main objective of the Plans of Attack made before the middle of July had always been the North-Western extremity of the Northern rampart, which was

only 1200 yards from the British outposts on the Ridge, and therefore accessible; whereas the Water Bastion, nearly two miles from the Flag-staff Tower, was under existing circumstances practically inaccessible.

The question of the defences of the city must be more closely examined, however, in order to render intelligible the method of attack their configuration involved.[1]

Its ramparts, consisting of bastions connected by curtains, and protected by a continuous ditch and glacis, had been recently modernised by Robert Napier, and were both efficient in plan and in perfect condition. The glacis had been so designed that a shot which cleared it would strike the rampart wall too high to make anything like a breach.[2] It is obvious that a shot fired straight across a ditch upon a wall thus protected must strike it high; if this shot, however, be fired down *the ditch of the flank* of a bastion, having had space in which to describe a longer curve, it will strike the rampart lower; so low, indeed, that if the flank be deep enough, the point at which it strikes will not be visible from the Battery. Clearly, therefore, it is desirable that a breach should be made, if possible, beside a bastion; and necessary that the Battery used for making the desired breach be placed on the prolongation of the flank of that bastion. The position of a Breaching Battery must satisfy two other requirements—(1) it must be near enough to the walls for the shot to demolish them; (2) no obstruction must intervene between its guns and the object on to which they are laid.

It is clear, even to a layman, that—(1) the relation of the Ridge to Delhi and to the approaches from the Panjab;

[1] See maps facing pp. 308 and 314.

[2] Clearly a breach cannot be made by battering the top of a wall; to be effective, the wall must be struck low and enough masonry shaken down to make a slope up which troops can rush.

(2) the character of the ground lying between the Ridge and the Northern front of Delhi; (3) the existence of a free space within the city suitable to the concentration and formation of troops between and behind the Water Bastion and the Kashmir Bastions; (4) and the fact that the Breaching Batteries, to be effective, should be placed on the prolongation of the flank of a bastion—approximately fixed the *academic* points at which it would be desirable to place the Breaching Batteries. These considerations are so little recondite that a glance at a map would suggest them to a professionally trained mind, and did so, doubtless, to many. They yield nothing more definite, however, than the direction a project of assault *should*, or *might* take *if* circumstances were propitious. The conclusions to be drawn from them are too liable to be cancelled by such accidents as the configuration of the ground, or the existence of such material obstructions as buildings, defences, etc., to serve as the material of a *working* Plan of Attack.

Metcalfe House and Park excepted, the ground between the Ridge, the river, and the city had never been in our hands. It was played on by the enemy's guns on the walls, and was enfiladed from both East and West by Batteries on the river's Eastern bank and in Paharipur; Ludlow Castle was occupied by a Sepoy picquet some one thousand strong, and protected at times by Batteries in its vicinity; the other large buildings to the East—the Kudsia Bagh, and the Customs House, the latter 150 yards from the city walls —were unknown quantities, no one knew whether the enemy had either occupied or fortified them, or whether defences had been erected in their neighbourhood. Many, therefore, were the possibilities which *might* militate against the execution of an attack from this highly desirable quarter.

It is obvious that a careful expert examination of this, the possible base of an assault, was the first pre-requisite to the formation of a definite Project of Attack. Information of absolute accuracy was an essential to success. Outnumbered as was the British Force, it was certain that the Breaching Batteries would have to be erected secretly, under cover of darkness, and *against time*. A mistake in position or elevation discovered when the project was in course of realisation would be disastrous. The question was, how to obtain this reliable detailed information ?

It was impossible to occupy the land in question. The General, had he been asked to do so, would have been justified in refusing: his troops barely sufficed to hold the positions already taken; their numbers would have been wholly insufficient to defend a larger area. But even had he waived this objection, the move would have been eminently undesirable, for secrecy was essential to success—success, owing to the great British inferiority in numbers and armament, could only be snatched from an enemy *taken by surprise*, and, consequently, unprepared; and this for the following reason. The mutineers had three hundred guns at their disposal, according to some computations, as against our sixty-three, the highest number we could hope to have after the arrival of the Siege Train in September. Their bastions, however, were not connected by ramparts proper—by walls constructed for the mounting of artillery—but by "a simple wall, about thirteen feet in thickness at the bottom, and eight feet at the springing of the parapet, sixteen feet above the level of the berm. The parapet, a thin screen of masonry, only three feet in thickness, eight feet in height, was pierced by loopholes for musketry, but afforded little or no protection against artillery fire."[1] Had they constructed a platform

[1] See Vibart, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

behind the curtain connecting these Northern bastions, and mounted their heavy guns, they could easily have blown our strongest Batteries to pieces, and thus put the idea of breaching the ramparts out of the question. It was all-important, therefore, that they should be innocent of any suspicion concerning the direction of our attack until our Breaching Batteries were actually constructed; this done, they would have to erect their defences and initiate their reprisals under the fire of British siege guns. To be first in the field was therefore of paramount importance.

But *how* to survey land in the enemy's hands, and played on by their guns, without first taking it, and thereby awakening suspicion?

The Engineers were on the horns of a dilemma. Their difficulties at this critical juncture were added to by their Colonel's health, which had been rudely shaken by the hardships of camp-life, and aggravated by a bruise on the ankle produced by a blow from a splinter of a spent shell. This "mere tap," as Baird Smith himself calls it, owing to his general ill-health produced lameness and so dangerous a degree of congestion and inflammation that the doctors feared mortification. How ill he was is shown in the following passage in which he describes his condition at the time:—"An attack of camp scurvy had filled my mouth with sores, shaken every joint in my body, and covered me all over with livid spots, so that I was marvellously unlovely to look upon. A smart knock on the ankle from the splinter of a shell which burst in my face—in itself a mere bagatelle of a wound—had been of necessity neglected under the pressing and incessant calls on me, and had grown worse and worse, till the whole foot below the ankle became a black mass and seemed to threaten mortification, . . . and to crown the pleasant catalogue, I was worn to a shadow by constant diarrhœa, and consumed as much opium with as

little effect as would have done credit to my father-in-law—De Quincey."[1]

Practically confined to the camp, and, latterly, to his tent, Colonel Baird Smith was unable to either initiate or direct the active operations of the Corps he commanded. He was obliged to abandon the performance of these important and arduous duties to his Second in Command. "Although nominally Chief Engineer at Delhi, and, as such, responsible to the General for all schemes for which sanction had to be obtained," writes General Sir Frederick Maunsell—then Lieutenant Maunsell, but one of the senior officers in the Engineer Brigade—"his numerous more important Staff duties, as well as the illness from which he suffered, practically forced him to delegate to Captain Taylor the actual duties of Chief Engineer." On Captain Taylor, therefore, fell the burden of drawing up a Project of Attack.

"Luckily"—continues Sir Frederick—"Taylor's engineering skill had long been appreciated in Upper India, where the Grand Trunk Road was known as 'Taylor's Road.' . . . Lord Lawrence had selected him, on account of his experience at the siege of Multan and his known ability, as *l'homme nécessaire* to find the way into Delhi. All this must have been well known to Baird Smith, and have satisfied him that he could safely leave the whole Plan of the Attack in the hands of his subordinate. This must have been a source of relief to him when he, in his turn, had to back Taylor's daring project with his authority, and to obtain for it the unwilling consent of an over-anxious General, weighed down by the responsibilities of so difficult a crisis."[2]

Baird Smith and his subordinate worked together admirably—the political duties, inherent in the position of Chief

[1] *A History of the Sepoy War*, Kaye: W. H. Allen, London, 1876, iii. pp. 547, 548.

[2] General Sir F. Maunsell, K.C.B., *Royal Engineer Journal*, July 1911.

Engineer under so heavily burdened a Commander as General Wilson, and the organisation of the enterprise, fell to the sick man in camp; while the scheme itself was conceived and gradually matured *on the spot*—as will be seen—by his vigorous young subordinate.

The temperaments of the two men, however, were so dissimilar, that, even without the brutal compulsion of the Chief Engineer's sickness, their orbits would have been virtually independent. As Sir John Kaye says in his account of the siege: "Their gifts were mutually complementary; neither could have taken Delhi without the assistance of the other."

Baird Smith was a man of delicate physique, and an administrator of exceptional ability; gifted with unusual powers of analysis and expression, he wielded a brilliant and prolific pen, to the quality of which his official reports and his contributions to the *Friend of India* testify, as does the literary excellence of the *Address to the Troops* issued by General Wilson, but believed to have been written by his Chief Engineer. "He did much noble work as an Englishman in checking and controlling the . . . objections of certain . . . senior officers in camp over whom his character, ability, and position as head of a very important Government Department gave him a power of domination such as was exercised by no one else," writes another of his subalterns, Charles Thomason, after the lapse of many decades had ripened his judgment. "He was unrivalled as an administrator," he continues, "and in nothing was this ability better evinced than in the completeness with which he made the purely engineering department of the siege the province of his Second in Command, Alex Taylor, and the vigour and steadiness with which he backed his every proposal." It must have been extremely bitter to so able and ambitious a man to be forced by illness to remain in his

tent while his subordinate went to the front. Ill as he was, however, he exercised a decisive influence on the course of events.

Alex Taylor belonged to a very different type. Young, in robust health, a well-known athlete, he was endowed with an energy and power of resource described as phenomenal by those who knew him then. His exuberant Irish spirits and irrepressible love of adventure were combined with a canny Scotchman's sober power of counting the cost and of foreseeing possibilities; and also, with a fixed determination to achieve his ends. He loved a dangerous game; but he played it with his head, and with every intention of winning.

"No sooner did he arrive," writes Charles Thomason, "than affairs assumed an entirely new complexion. At last we had a Chief Engineer of siege-works. A very few days after his arrival he had the complete confidence of all of us subalterns. We would have followed him anywhere. Perpetually on the move, he lost no time in studying *on the spot*, and at great personal risk, every feature of the scene of his future operations—of which, it may be observed in passing, no record existed at the time. And thus he collected the necessary information, and worked it into a serviceable project."

Boyishly simple and frank in his ways, he was singularly devoid of personal ambition. This element of unworldliness, native to him, had been strengthened by his Hofwyl training and by the example of his chiefs, Robert Napier and John Lawrence, both of whom devoted their whole beings with absolute singleness of purpose to public ends, and to whom the very thought of self-advancement or of self-advertisement never occurred. Bright, loyal, generous, as able as he was brave—he was beloved by the whole camp. "The younger officers of the Engineers swore by him," writes Sir John Kaye, who goes on to speak with enthusiasm,

"of his wonderful fertility of resource, and the self-sacrifice he continually displayed."[1] Such was the young man on whose ability and audacity—circumstances and his own temperament combining—was entrusted the evolution of the Plan of Attack on which the fate of Northern India depended at that moment.

Fortunately letters exist in which Alex Taylor describes both the difficulties with which the Engineer Corps had then to contend and the manner in which they were met. "It will be convenient," he writes, "to consider separately the time during which we were on the defensive, and that during which we were the assailants. During the first period, the engineering operations were, as compared to the second, on a smaller scale. The following was then the general routine: the work to be done 'to-morrow' was decided 'to-day,' generally on my return to camp in the evening, but sometimes on the report of the Engineer officers as they came off duty, or on the requisition of officers commanding posts. Detailed orders were then drawn up, placed on record, and issued. . . . Anything emergent was dealt with on the spot—generally by me and reported to Baird Smith on my return to camp. This arrangement worked excellently. I do not remember ever having had any difficulty in having what I wished . . . 'put in orders,' or that I was ever directed to carry out any project of which I did not approve.

But beside the current work there was the large question ever present—'How is the attack to be made, eventually?' I often talked the matter over with Baird Smith. We both agreed as to the front which must be attacked, and it was also clear to us both of what value *time* would be, when once we had taken such a step as would disclose our intentions to the enemy. An attack in full form, with trenches, etc., was out

[1] Kaye, *op. cit.*, iii. p. 573.

of the question ; we could not hope to have the necessary men for it."

He then goes on to speak of the difficulty of acquiring the information necessary to the formation of a project of attack. "Before such a project could be framed, *i.e.* a project involving the formation of a breach," he continues, "it would have to be clearly ascertained that the walls could be seen—from a distance—so low down as to admit of their being breached. If not, then an attack of this kind would be impossible. Again, in a race against time, it was evidently necessary that the proposals, whatever they might be, should be critically examined beforehand on the very ground. There must be no question as to whether objects to be fired at by the proposed Batteries would be clearly visible from these Batteries. There must be no room for error."

This type of information would have been given by a good map of the ground which would be the future field of operations, had such a thing existed, which was unfortunately not the case. "I can speak with some authority on this point," writes General Sir F. Maunsell in the *Engineer Journal* of July 1911, "as the plans of all the fortified places were under my charge at Roorkee, and the plan of Delhi there showed no detail of the many buildings, walls, trees, and copses which afforded such dense cover on the site ultimately chosen ; a knowledge of such details was absolutely indispensable when considering the scheme of attack." "Moreover," he adds, referring to this incomplete map of the area in question "this plan does not seem to have been taken to Delhi ; it was not forthcoming when asked for by the Engineers who were assisting Captain Taylor later on in thoroughly examining the ground. Lieutenant Charles Thomason—whose duties during this phase of the operations lay in the left attack—asked for such a map to aid him in the prosecution of his duties, but it was not to be had."

"Under these circumstances," proceeds Taylor, "it seemed clear to me that, as Baird Smith was detained in his room by sickness and a wound, it was very unlikely that he would be able to frame a project for the big job before us, and that it became my duty to set about the making of one.
The first thing to be done was to get on to the ground on which our work would be. But how to do it? It had long been in the enemy's hands (indeed, from the very commencement . . . it had never been in ours), and he had a very large picquet (perhaps a regiment) in Ludlow Castle. As we were most anxious to avoid alarming him in this direction, it would not do to ask the General to drive in this picquet. Nor, even were this done, were we likely, thus, by open force, to be able to carefully examine the ground we wanted—to get into the Kudsia Bagh, and to examine the Custom House and the ground round it, lying close to the ramparts as they did. The prospects were not encouraging."

A daring idea rose one day to the surface of his consciousness and gradually captivated his imagination. "Could I not venture on to the ground in question, and examine it myself?" he thought. It was a mile from our nearest picquets, it was true, it was played on by the guns on the ramparts, and the enemy held it in force, but not methodically — so he guessed, from his knowledge of "Pandy." The idea was attractive: its execution would be risky in the extreme, its results invaluable if he succeeded.

He determined to await his opportunity, and before long it came. "Watching Ludlow Castle one day from the Ridge," he writes, "it seemed to me that the old picquet had vacated and that the new one had not arrived. I thought I had now a chance. Disencumbering myself of my sword, and armed with a pistol only, I took a party of sixteen picquet-men of the Guides, and, advancing from

Metcalfe's House picquet, passed between Ludlow Castle and the river, and reached the Kudsia Bagh. Leaving the men in extended order outside, with strict orders on no account to fire, I entered the enclosure with the havildar, and explored it thoroughly; then, mounting on to the wall next the city, I could see the sentry on the ramparts seemingly so close that it was difficult not to think that he must hear the noise my climbing unavoidably made. The Custom House, 180 yards from him, lay immediately in front of me, and for more than an hour, lying on my face on the top of the wall, behind a shrub, I carefully examined it and the ground around it. Finally, after a stay in the Kudsia Bagh of about two hours, we effected our retreat without having been observed. This work was, of course, of extreme risk and danger.[1] We knew that our left flank was safe, as it rested on the river; but, obliged as we were to keep ourselves strictly in the dense cultivation (chiefly groves of orange bushes), we could not know what was happening on our right, and with the enemy's picquet-house between us and our nearest post—more than a mile off—escape would have been hopeless had we been discovered.

[1] The following entries in the diary of Munshi Jiwan Lal suggest the unpleasant results of being caught when making reconnaissances in the Kudsia Bagh. "29th May. A European was brought in to-day, having been found in the Kudsia Bagh. He was first of all declared to be John Lawrence. His captors said he had been identified by an old wound in his back. On his being stripped no wound was found on his person. From him . . . did these bloodthirsty wretches draw the clothing of life." . . . "22nd June. The three regiments from Jullundur arrived, and were encamped in the Kudsia Bagh Garden." . . . "Several Europeans who were concealed in the serai of Mahbub Ali Khan were killed, and their heads laid before the King. The King on seeing their heads expressed himself much pleased, and gave a reward of a hundred rupees to those who had killed the Europeans."—C. T. Metcalfe, C.S.I., *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 125, 145. "It was frequently said by officers and men that death would be preferable to falling into the hands of the rebels."—Thackeray, *op. cit.* (*Two Indian Campaigns*), p. 61.

I learned on this occasion (1) that the roof of the Custom House had been burned and had fallen in, but that the brick walls remained standing; this was afterwards the site of Battery No. 3; (2) that the rampart could not be breached from the Kudsia Bagh; (3) that neither the Kudsia Bagh nor the Custom House were or had been occupied by the enemy, the vegetation round them being fresh and untrampled; and (4) that the only place in the vicinity outside the walls which was occupied in force was Ludlow Castle.

Other opportunities similar in character . . . offered themselves at intervals through the operations in July, August, and September, and I always tried to take advantage of them, though not always with success. Sometimes we stumbled on the enemy, and had to fall back."

Charles Thomason has left an excellent description of the first of these unsuccessful reconnaissances. "I saw a good deal of Taylor one way or another during the occupation of the Ridge," he writes, "as I was one of the Engineers charged with the task of surveying the land lying between the North-Eastern extremity of the Ridge and the walls of Delhi, *i.e.* the ground which was eventually the site of our Breaching Batteries, and their approaches. But little work in this direction was done before his arrival, as the area in question was in the enemy's hands—after 12th June they held Ludlow Castle strongly—was traversed by deep ravines debouching on the Jumna, and was, moreover, overgrown by trees and patches of dense vegetation which gave excellent cover to the mutineers in possession.

I had succeeded once only in getting to Ludlow Castle, and that before it was held by the enemy. On that occasion I was seen from the ramparts, and cavalry was dispatched in my pursuit, from whom my escape was providential; but that is another story. I was able to familiarise myself, however,

with the ravines and woodland in the Metcalfe House park, and was able, occasionally, to look over the Southern boundary wall into the dense lime-groves of the Kudsia Bagh, into the midst of which I never penetrated, as I could *hear* that it was not unoccupied.

The work I did then was exceedingly dangerous. I was much discouraged by the little I achieved, and by the slight interest taken in it by my superior officers. No sooner, however, did Taylor arrive on the scene, than he set to work to examine the ground, which, it was patent to all, must be the scene of our future operations.

He had not been long in the camp before he came down to see what I had in hand. We started, by agreement, one early morning, carrying prismatic compasses, with the walls of Delhi as our goal, and accompanied by some twenty of Coke's[1] 'Lambs,' and some chainmen. (I may observe here in passing that scouting is one thing, and *surveying on the enemy's* land another !) I remember expatiating, as we walked down the road together, on the difficulties which had so far checked my progress. Taylor's attitude was exceedingly optimistic. Thus chatting, we approached to within forty yards of the boundary-wall already alluded to; we had halted in order to so place our escort as to protect ourselves from a flank attack from the side of Ludlow Castle, when the heads and muskets of more than two hundred men suddenly appeared over the wall; a volley was delivered right in our faces, puffs of smoke hung in the air, the men sank out of sight behind the wall, and we could hear them reloading. They must have been watching us as we sauntered down the road !

I can still see the smile with which Taylor turned to me, and said 'Here's a go ! What's to be done ?'. At the same time, glancing over our shoulders, we saw the heels of our

[1] 1st Panjab Infantry raised by the late General Sir John Coke, G.C.B.

vanishing escort. 'We can't take Delhi by ourselves,' said I; to which Taylor replied 'Don't let's run!' I agreed; so we walked sedately back to the edge of a deep neighbouring nulla, into which we dropped; once out of sight we put down our heads, and legged it as fast as we could along the smooth stream-bed, and, mercifully, got safely into the neighbourhood of the Metcalfe House picquet. I took the lead, as I knew the lie of the land, which Taylor did not, as this was his first visit to the place. Fortunately none of our men were disabled; only one of them, a chainman, had been touched, grazed above the knee. We afterwards learned that the mutineers who had fired on us were not a mere patrolling party, but the advance-guard of a considerable force moving against the Ridge. This was Taylor's introduction to the reconnaissances on my 'beat.'"[1]

On another occasion, after having scrutinised Ludlow Castle from the Flag-staff Tower at the hour at which the picquet was generally relieved, and having reason to believe that it was empty, Taylor determined to make use of the opportunity, and—an escort not being immediately forthcoming—made his way alone to the building. It seemed to him empty. He entered cautiously, crept like a cat up the stone turret-stair, and, finally, emerged on to the roof. He was in the act of examining and noting the sights it commanded, when the oncoming tramp of a thousand men saluted his ears, grew louder, and, to his horror, he saw the advance-guard of the enemy's picquet file into the compound. He bounded downstairs, six steps at a time, reached the back-door, crossed the compound in the rear of the building, and succeeded in scaling the enclosure wall—it was more than six feet high—not, however, before some of the Sepoys had turned the corner of the house, and, kneeling to aim, blowing the while on their port-fires, had sent scattered shots

[1] Major-General Charles Thomason, MS.

after him. The high wall now befriended him, and he made his way as swiftly as he could to the shelter of our nearest picquet. As he said, "it was a shave!"

"On most of these explorations," he writes, "I was not accompanied by any officer. The work was of a very dangerous and risky kind, and lives in those days were valuable. But Thomason was with me on one of my failures, and Greathed on another day when we succeeded in getting into the Kudsia Bagh."

Though Taylor generally made these advanced preliminary reconnaissances alone, or assisted by a small native escort only—a brother-officer who was less of an athlete than himself being a source of danger rather than a help—many minor reconnaissances were made under his orders by his subordinates at great personal risk; of these, unfortunately, few records remain. The Guides and the Gurkhas who were accustomed to hill-fighting and to big-game shooting, and were, moreover, as alert and fierce as tigers, generally formed the escort on these occasions. As a rule, their conduct left nothing to be desired; the following incident, however, shows that on one occasion the Gurkhas were led away by their sporting instincts.

Charles Thomason was the hero of this adventure, and will tell his own story. "Late one afternoon in August," he writes, "I met Taylor, who at that time was busily collecting the information which would enable him to fix the exact site of Siege Battery No. 1. He had been out all day and was evidently tired. He begged me to get him some 'distances' on the road lying between the Ridge and the Kashmir Gate. I postponed the job till it was dusk, as the road was exposed, and it was only a question of pacing; then, taking five Gurkhas with me, I pushed down to a group of tombs commanding the section of the road in which I was interested; I placed two Gurkhas

in the shelter of these masonry blocks, and three others in a more advanced position on my left, with the purpose of protecting me from flank attack from the cover in the neighbourhood of Ludlow Castle. I then prepared to do my pacing. In the meantime heavy firing had sprung up on our left, and the bullets flew pretty freely about me as I made the necessary measurements. I subsequently found that a party of our own Pioneers, who had been sent down to collect brushwood for fascines, had been attacked by a considerable body of the enemy, and that I was within the area of their mutual attentions!

Having obtained the necessary information, I fell back, as I supposed, on my supports, calling softly as I passed to the men who should have been covering my left flank. No reply! Neither were the Gurkhas I had left behind the tombs to be seen! I called again. No answer! I was alone, darkness was closing in, firing was going on in my close proximity: it was not a pleasant position! There was nothing to be done, however, but to wait. Presently jovial sounds were heard from the left, and up swung my escort in high spirits, with two peacocks in their hands! These had flown past them, and they had been led astray by such an opportunity for shikar! I was more interested, however, in getting back to camp.

I found Taylor on the Ridge, telescope in hand, anxiously scanning the road. He had seen the engagement on my left, and was afraid I might have been 'nabbed.' 'It was a close thing,' he said, and was evidently much relieved to see me; saying repeatedly, 'I had no idea I was going to let you in for anything of the sort.' I gave him the information he needed."

On yet another occasion Taylor was the innocent means of putting Charles Thomason into a position which was not particularly to his liking. He will, again, tell his own story.

"Taylor," he writes, "wanted some minute information which I could only get by making a detailed survey with accurate instruments from my base line, Hindu Rao's House, the Observatory, and the Flag-staff Tower. Taking my theodolite with me, I climbed to the top of the Observatory. I had a companion on this occasion, a senior brother-subaltern, J. Tennant, who had already done distinguished service in the Government Survey Department.

The Observatory consisted of a masonry shaft—built to accommodate astronomical instruments—rising from a basement containing several rooms, none of which were more than ten feet high. The top of this shaft was provided with a platform, five or six feet in diameter, in which a circular trench, some three feet deep, had been traced. It was approached by an exceedingly steep and narrow flight of *external* stairs, was about sixty feet above the level of the ground, and was unprotected by any parapet. Owing to an accident with which I had met in my school-boy days, heights affected my head painfully; the horror with which I still regard them was aggravated at that time by the state of my health. Before the Mutiny broke out I had been suffering from sunstroke and dysentery, and had been brought in a half-unconscious state by my servants into cantonments, from my solitary camp some forty miles from Delhi, on 11th May, the day of the Delhi rebellion. The life I had led since then—that of a refugee, sheltered from death by friendly natives, and then that of a soldier fighting in the ranks of an outnumbered force—had not been calculated to re-establish my shattered nerves. As a matter of fact I should not have been in camp, but in hospital. The idea, therefore, of climbing a narrow stairway to the top of a giddy shaft was abhorrent to me! The thing had to be done, however. Tennant remained on the roof of the lower storey, as the space above was limited and lives were precious,

and up I went, followed by my Sikh Sapper orderly, Gurmukh Singh, who carried my theodolite. Now, a better fellow than Gurmukh Singh never lived. I knew him well; he had faced more than one danger at my side with admirable presence of mind; he was extremely good-looking, tall, slim, with fiercely upbrushed, tiger-like whiskers and moustache, and an angelic smile, the memory of which will never leave me.

The top of the Observatory was perhaps the most exposed place on the Ridge, and as we climbed the narrow stair we were an easy mark for the enemy's sharp-shooters, who lay in the cover at a distance of about fifty yards beyond the Batteries at the foot of the Observatory. Once at the top of the shaft I adjusted the theodolite. Our figures, silhouetted against the sky, were clearly visible from the ramparts, the guns from which soon began to pay us every attention, and I can assure you that Gurmukh Singh and I, up in our eyrie, had quite a lively time of it! I occupied myself with the instrument; it was Gurmukh Singh's duty to warn me of the approach of missiles. My nerves were not the least affected by the fire of which we were the target, but I confess that it was purgatory to me to approach the naked edge of our perch, and, leaning with a swimming head over the abyss, to put Tennant into possession of the figures registered by the theodolite. I was in the act of taking my last observation, when I was suddenly seized by the leg and dragged down into the trench! There was no ceremony about the process, which was as painful as it was abrupt; still, I could not help laughing when I saw Gurmukh Singh standing over me, and heard his indignant 'Sunta nahin, main bola "down!"?' ('Do you not hear me? I said "down"!'):—no 'Sahib' in his excitement. The round-shot from which he had saved me had knocked my theodolite out of adjustment, we had got the information

we wanted, and the enemy were getting our range rather too exactly; so we thought we had better be off. Then came *my* treat—the descent!

I mention these two incidents because they shed a light on the character and fearlessness of our admirable native co-adjutors, the Gurkhas and Sikhs; also because they show how dangerous was the work which we were all doing under Taylor's leadership, but in which he was pre-eminent. That he got through the siege untouched is simply miraculous!"

It was necessary, for the reasons already given, that the reconnaissances conducted on the ground lying between the Ridge, the Water Bastion, and the Kashmir Bastion should be attended by secrecy. No such conditions applied to the debatable land to the front and West of the Ridge which was the scene of constant encounters between the mutineers and our soldiers. The Engineers, therefore, were able to survey it openly, without running the faintest risk of giving the enemy any clue to the nature or direction of the project for their undoing which was being gradually matured.

A vivid idea of the circumstances under which these reconnaissances were made may be gathered from the spirited pages in which Lieutenant Medley describes those in which he himself took part, pages which have the sparkle and convincing veracity of unstudied records of thrilling personal experiences. "Several of our officers," he writes, "were told off for reconnoitring and surveying, with a view to obtaining accurate knowledge of the ground to our front. I was one amongst three or four others, and very exciting work it was, sometimes. The object of the first of these expeditions was, I remember, to determine the site of a new Battery—to the left and in advance of the Sammy House—which was to prevent our being annoyed by sorties from the Lahore Gate. Captain Taylor and myself started early in the morning with an escort of four Gurkhas, and, getting into the long grass,

worked away in the proper direction. I surveyed, and Taylor 'looked out for squalls.' The Gurkhas considered it fine fun, and made capital videttes; at last we found ourselves on the ground leading to the Lahore Gate, our old friend the Mori Bastion, with which we had often exchanged civilities, looking us straight in the face. Several of the enemy's Sepoys were coming jauntily down the road when suddenly they saw us, not two hundred yards off, and were brought up, all standing, with surprise. Taylor then levelled his telescope at them, on which they took to their heels, and sang out to their friends in the Mori; the next moment a bright flash and the whish-sh of a round shot over our heads warned us to beat a retreat, which we did very composedly."

On the 24th of August a similar reconnaissance on a larger scale was made along a deep dry stream-bed which ran from the Pagoda picquet, behind the proposed site of No. 1 Siege Battery, and between the proposed sites of Batteries 2 and 4 on the one hand, and 3 on the other, and which debouched into the river in the Kudsia Bagh grounds.[1] The existence of this nulla was providential; indeed, it is hardly too much to say that without this great dry ditch —which afterwards served as a natural first parallel to the besiegers—the Plan which Alex Taylor was elaborating would have been almost impossible of execution; for, without its shelter, workers and materials could not have been conveyed without observation and overwhelming loss to the sites of the Batteries when the latter were under construction; while the making of such a parallel would have consumed precious lives and invaluable time, and would have put the secret so jealously guarded—the direction of the future attack—into the hands of the enemy.

[1] Remmington's—the Battery, the site of which was chosen on this expedition, was shortly afterwards constructed as a preliminary to the attack.

"As the line to be established was long," writes Lieutenant Thomason, "and much exposed, Taylor divided the work between four Engineer officers—Home, Medley, himself, and myself; we each had to survey a section of the nulla, the plan being to make a few observations from given points, and then, if necessary, to withdraw before the enemy had had time to prepare concerted opposition."

"This time," writes Medley, "we went with an escort of some sixty Gurkhas. We crept down into the nulla, and, dividing the work among us, commenced surveying and plotting away at a great pace, our movements being considerably accelerated by the knowledge that we were seven hundred yards from our line of picquets, and that the ground was not very favourable for running.

We had very nearly completed our work, and would very likely have got off unobserved, when some Pandy-grass-cutters spied us out, and ran off to the Kashmir Gate. The enemy sallied forth in great force, and began to fire from a long distance. When they had thoroughly ascertained how small our party was, they got more bold, and, sneaking through the long grass in swarms, tried to get round and cut us off, keeping up a teasing fire. The Gurkhas were ordered not to fire, and fell back very steadily, while we went on surveying, resolved to finish our work in spite of all the Pandies in creation. I was comfortably seated under a small tree, which formed a sort of protection, and was busy taking angles, when a puff of smoke rose from the Kashmir Bastion, and a shower of grape came just over us, tearing the tree to pieces. This was rather too close to be pleasant, and a second shot immediately afterwards—which threw the dust and stones right over us as it ploughed up the ground—made us execute a rapid flank-movement, which took us out of range of the gun.

We had done our work, and walked quietly towards Hindu

Rao's, but Pandy knew he should get a chance as we went up the slope of the hill, and let drive with a round-shot by way of a parting hint. Their skirmishers followed us pretty closely. The Gurkhas prayed to be allowed to have just *one* shot before the fun was over, and, on receiving permission from Captain Taylor, threw themselves into the grass and commenced a file-firing which caused Pandy to beat a precipitate retreat, and it was with some difficulty we prevented the hillmen from following up. When we were nearly home I asked the little native officer who was with us if any of his men had been hit. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'one was hit.' 'Where is he?' 'Oh, he is coming along all right.' And so he was, too, with a little help; yet the man was shot through the groin, and died the same night. Another man was hit in the thigh, but not badly; these were our only two casualties.

On arriving at Hindu Rao's we found General Wilson and some of his Staff, who had been watching our proceedings rather anxiously."

Several such openly conducted reconnaissances on the right front of our position, and many secret reconnaissances on the left, put Taylor into possession of reliable topographical and strategical information. On this he based a Plan of Attack, definite in form, and carefully worked out in detail. This Plan was designed to meet three all-important considerations: (1) the necessity of keeping the mutineers ignorant as long as possible of our intention of attacking from the left; (2) the necessity of getting so decided a command of the approaches to the future field of operations as would make it impossible for the mutineers to attack our works in force; (3) the necessity of making our first Battery strong enough to overwhelm the mutineers' artillery-fire from the Northern Bastions, and thus to force them, if they attempted to mount new guns, to do so under our fire.

The erection of a large Battery in two wings on a small plateau three hundred yards from Hindu Rao's House realised all these desiderata. Its position on our *right* centre was intended to deceive the mutineers into thinking that the assault would be delivered from the right, as on former occasions, and that its objective would still be the Western extremity of the Northern Rampart. Its right wing was designed to play on the Mori Bastion and to silence its fire, while the guns in its left wing—trained on to the Kashmir Gate—vetoed a sortie in force from that exit.

This protective Battery once erected, its guns holding the mutineers' attention, silencing their fire, and confining them within the city-walls, the ground on which Taylor intended to place his Siege Batteries proper—that lying in front of the Eastern end of the Northern Ramparts—would be both isolated and free from hostile fire at close quarters, except that from the city-wall to its front. It would then be the Engineers' duty to construct three Breaching Batteries on this protected area:—two in the vicinity of Ludlow Castle and Kudsia Bagh—in which buildings strong covering parties would be placed—and one in the Custom House, only 170 yards from the ramparts.

No. 1 Battery was obviously, as Colonel Baird Smith writes, "the key of the position; on its success depended the opening of Delhi to the besieging columns. The progress of the other Batteries depended essentially on its efficiency."[1] This Battery once placed, all would be well; the difficulty lay in its erection, and this difficulty seemed insuperable. General Wilson maintained that its

[1] Sir John Kaye, in commenting on the rôle allotted to this Battery in the field operations, writes: "It was a happy stroke of genius to surprise and divert the enemy by running up No. 1 Battery in a single night, to play on the Mori Bastion. . . ." "It was Taylor's unaided idea," he adds.—Kaye, *op. cit.*, iii. p. 574. See map facing p. 308.

construction, out in the open, *before* the fire from the Mori Bastion was silenced, was an impossibility. The Engineers met this objection by undertaking to erect it under the cover of the darkness of a single night, and, on their reiterated assertion of their ability to make good their word, the General gave the Project his assent.

Of the three Breaching Batteries, the erection of which was to follow that of No. 1 Battery—No. 2 was placed in front of Ludlow Castle, with the Kashmir Bastion and curtain for its objectives, and the making of the Main Breach for its task; while to Nos. 3 and 4—in the Customs House and Kudsia Bagh—was allotted the silencing of the guns of the Water Bastion and the making of the "Water Bastion Breach." The third item in this Plan of Attack was the destruction by gunpowder of the Kashmir Gate, the demolition of which would cleave a way into Delhi, serviceable, not to troops only, as were the breaches, but to artillery also.

It was not enough, however, to design a *general* Plan of Attack, and to accurately locate the Batteries which were its main features. Taylor was well aware that his Project would be realised in the hour of action by the members of a numerically insufficient force, striving—in the dark and probably under fire—to effect their purpose before sunrise. Nothing which economised time or life was negligible. It was with problems born of these conditions—problems which could only be worked out on the ground itself—that he grappled as he prowled about the enemy's ground with his life in his hands, during the long months which preceded the siege. He not only designed the Batteries and fixed their sites, which he *paced and measured*, but also designed and protected their approaches, planned shelters for gunners off duty and for covering-parties, and made sketch-maps destined to guide our troops, moving against time, to their posts in darkness, on unknown ground

bristling with obstacles—buildings, walls, copses, thick underwood, and dry deeply-cut stream-beds, etc. No detail was too small to escape his searching attention.

While this work was in progress he daily discussed the information thus obtained with his Chief, thought over and amended his maps and plans—which were necessarily rough, owing to the circumstances under which they were made—passed them through the "office" in which they were neatly copied, amplified and annotated by Colonel Baird Smith; and then considered and re-considered them in the light of further information procured on the field. "In this laborious way," he writes, "I was able to mature a Plan which would bear scrutinising."

These were the initial steps which resulted in what his comrade, Sir Frederick Maunsell, has termed "an operation, unprecedented in the annals of warfare—a battle-field previously surveyed; the position of every gun, and of the attacking Force, and the way to every post distinctly marked on ground which was *under the very eyes and fire of a watchful enemy*, and—finally—the operation carried out exactly as pre-designed."[1]

The chief note of these reconnaissances, apart from the ability and courage they demanded, was the secrecy[2] with which they were conducted. Even the Engineers who procured certain pieces of information for Alex Taylor, or worked out certain sections of his Plan, were completely ignorant of the general scope of the Project, and of the difficulty and danger which had attended its initiation and

[1] General Sir F. Maunsell, *Nineteenth Century*, October 1911.

[2] Sir Frederick has described this series of reconnaissances as "a work of great labour and danger, possible only to one of Taylor's physical capacity and resolute and adventurous spirit, and involving days and nights of perilous scoutings and hair-breadth escapes." He goes on to speak of the caution and secrecy necessarily observed, lest the enemy should get a clue to the nature of the project under elaboration.

evolution. And if the Engineers themselves—who were in daily personal contact with their Second in Command—were thus ignorant, how much more so were the members of other branches of the Service, whose professional duties never took them near the future field of operations?

Two officers only in the Force were really cognisant of Taylor's movements as a whole and aware of their significance—his Chief, Colonel Baird Smith, and his old frontier friend, the young Brigadier-General, John Nicholson.

The former, however—an invalid, confined to a tent pitched at a distance of nearly two miles from the future scene of action, his health strained almost to breaking-point by the effort to meet special duties of a political and administrative rather than military character—was probably quite unaware that the Project, the gradual evolution of which he was following with such interest, was framed by his Second in Command at the price of exceptional peril and fatigue. From whom could he have learned this, except from Alex Taylor himself? and from whom was he less likely to learn it?

General Nicholson, however—a man of powerful frame and untiring physical energy—was fully aware of the great importance of the information Alex Taylor was amassing, and of the immense personal risk inseparable from his exertions. His sources of information were manifold, for he was in constant personal contact with the Chief Engineer and his Second in Command, and had access to Colonel Baird Smith's official communications; he was, moreover, the only officer of rank who visited the dangerous scene of future operations *before* it was occupied in force. During the strain and stress of the siege he gave repeated and energetic expression to his high appreciation of the rôle played by the young Engineer throughout the operations which culminated in the capture of the city.

CHAPTER VIII

AUGUST

On Saturday, 7th August—the army before Delhi being occupied, as usual, in doggedly awaiting reinforcements, repelling attacks, and preparing for the coming siege—"a stranger of very striking appearance"—so writes a member of the Force—"was remarked visiting all our picquets, examining everything, and making the most searching inquiries about their strength and history. His attire gave no clue to his rank; it had evidently never cost its owner a thought. It was soon made out that this was General Nicholson, whose person was not yet known in camp, and it was whispered at the time that he was possessed of the most brilliant military genius. He was a man cast in a giant-mould, with massive chest and powerful limbs, an expression at once ardent and commanding, with a dash of roughness, features of stern beauty, a long black beard, and deep, sonorous voice. There was something of immense strength and resolution in his whole frame and manner, and a power of ruling men on high occasion which no one could help noticing. His imperious air—which never left him, and which would have been thought arrogance in one of less imposing mien—sometimes gave offence to the more unbending of his countrymen, but made him almost worshipped by the pliant Asiatic."[1]

[1] *Life of Nicholson*, by Captain L. Trotter. John Murray, 1898, p. 256.

Having crushed the Panjab mutineers, Nicholson had ridden ahead of the Movable Column in response to an urgent appeal from General Wilson, who feared lest the numbers at his disposal might prove insufficient to prevent the enemy from cutting off his means of communication with his base. He was also, doubtless, influenced by his wish to see with his own eyes how matters stood. The lie of the land delighted him. "Our position is a perfectly providential one," he wrote to Herbert Edwardes on 12th August; "we could not have found one better suited to our requirements. Had the ground been of an ordinary character, we must have abandoned it long ago, but the Ridge, with the strong buildings on it in front, and the river and canals protecting our flanks and rear, have saved us. I think Wilson has hitherto had considerable cause for anxiety. Had the enemy had the enterprise to detach a strong force in his rear, he could not have sent more than five hundred or six hundred men against it. It is too late for them to try that game now, and they know it, and are at their wits' end to devise some new plan of action. . . . When the second Siege Train from Ferozpur arrives, I believe we shall be able to go in."[1]

Having seen what was to be seen in camp, he rejoined his Column on 12th August, and, on the following day, rode into camp at the head of that *corps d'élite*, amid the cheers and rejoicing of the whole army, for all knew that his arrival preluded the vigorous action on which they were so intent.

Many ardent spirits in camp fretted against the inactivity to which they had been condemned so long. They had taken the Ridge early in June and were burning to assume the offensive directly the Siege Train and John Lawrence's reinforcements arrived. Equally desirous was

[1] Lady Edwardes, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 46.

John Lawrence that a decisive blow should be struck, for the delay was costing him his grip on the Panjab. A whisper reached him that the General was minded to postpone the attack until he was largely reinforced from Calcutta. "If we delay for reinforcements from below," he wrote to Henry Norman, "God only knows what may happen. Every day's delay complicates matters, and adds to our difficulties. Every day more regiments are breaking out, and before long we shall have no native army left."[1] He was already anxiously entertaining the thought of abandoning Peshawar and the Trans-Indus Provinces, and of concentrating at Lahore.

General Wilson—whose health was beginning to break down under a strain which had undermined that of two of his predecessors—was in a most anxious position. By all the rules of war the Force at his disposal was too small to justify the risk of an assault. Failure would mean the annihilation of his army and a general rising and massacre in Northern India. Inaction spelt ruin.

He made an able and forcible statement of the position in the following letter, written on 20th August, and sent to Colonel Baird Smith in order to receive his remarks and emendations before it was sent as a *pièce-justificative* to Lord Canning: "A letter has been received from the Governor-General, urging our immediately taking Delhi, and he seems angry that this was not done long ago. I wish to explain to him the true state of affairs—that Delhi is seven miles in circumference, filled with an immense fanatical Musalman population, garrisoned by fully 40,000 soldiers armed and disciplined by ourselves, with 114 pieces of artillery mounted on the walls, with the largest magazine of shot, shell, and ammunition in the Upper Provinces at their disposal, besides some sixty pieces of field artillery, all

[1] Bosworth Smith, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 203.

of our own manufacture, and manned by artillerymen drilled and taught by ourselves; that the fort itself has been made so strong by perfect flanking defences erected by our own engineers, and a glacis, which prevents our guns breaking the walls lower than eight feet from the top without the labour of a regular siege and sap, for which the Force and Artillery sent against it has been quite inadequate; that an attempt to blow in the gates, and escalade the walls, was twice contemplated, but it was considered, from the state of preparation against such an attack, . . . would inevitably have failed, and caused the most irreparable disaster to our cause; and that, even if we had succeeded in forcing our way into the place, the small Force disposable for the attack would have been most certainly lost in the numerous streets of so large a city, and have been cut to pieces. It was, therefore, considered advisable to confine our efforts to holding the position we now occupy—which is naturally strong, and has been daily rendered more so by our Engineers—until the Force coming up from below could join and co-operate in the attack. That since the command of the Force has devolved on me, I have considered it imperatively necessary to adopt the same plan, as the only chance of safety to the Empire, and that I strongly urge upon his Lordship the necessity of his ordering General Havelock's, or some other Force, marching upon Delhi as soon as possible.

The Force under my command is—and has been, since the day we took up our position—actually *besieged* by the mutineers, who from the immense extent of suburbs and gardens extending to the walls of the town, have such cover for their attacks that it has been very difficult to repel them, and at the same time to inflict such a loss as would deter a repetition of them. They have frequently been driven back with loss, but they immediately take refuge under the grape-fire of their heavy guns on the city walls, and, on our retirement,

re-occupy their former position; every such attack upon them has entailed a heavy loss upon our troops, which we can ill spare, and has done us little good. I shall be reinforced by a Siege Train from Ferozpur by the end of this or the beginning of next month, when I intend to commence more offensive operations against the city; but I cannot hold out any hope of being able to take the place until supported by the Force from below.

As an artillery officer, I have no hesitation in giving my opinion that the attack on Delhi, garrisoned and armed as it is now, is as arduous an undertaking as was the attack on Bharatpur, in 1825–6, for which 25,000 troops and one hundred pieces of artillery were not considered too large a force. I enclose a return of the original Force which was sent down to capture this strong place, and also a return of the present effective Force, including sick and wounded, from which his Lordship will see how desperate would have been any attempt to take the city by assault, more especially as the mutineers keep a large portion of their Force encamped outside the city walls, who, on our assaulting the city, could easily attack and capture our camp, with all our hospitals, stores, and ammunition, unless a strong provision were made against it."[1]

Baird Smith replied by showing the General the Plan of Attack. A letter of 21st August, in which the Chief Engineer describes the *mise en scène* of this event to his wife, is worth quoting, it is so full of local colour. Having spoken of the condition of his bruised foot, which was swathed in cold-water bandages in order to keep down inflammation, and of which he complains as making him "rather inefficient as far as personal activity goes," he writes: "Just as I was in the act of eating my small modicum of dinner yesterday, at about five, the 'General Sahib'

[1] Kaye and Malleson, *op. cit.*, iv. p. 2.

was announced, and in he stalked, finding me with no stocking on one foot and no shoe on the other. However, I took it very easily, and we sat down on my bed, and had a good hour's talk by the 'Shrewsbury Clock.' . . . I then showed him my Plan of Attack. He was apparently rather shocked by what he considered its 'boldness,' and had a dozen fears to express, the only serious one being the fear that in such weather as this, and still more in September, the soldiers would not be able to work, but would be struck down by the sun if in the open trenches all day. It has often been a grave and serious thought of my own, this; so we're at one upon it; but I could not bring myself to say that I thought this an insuperable difficulty."[1]

The result of this and other interviews was that the General was convinced, little by little, of the feasibility of the Engineers' proposal, and gave the necessary orders. Measures preparatory to the execution of the Project were put in hand, therefore. The most important of these was the construction of a Battery on the plateau in front of the Sammy House, the function of which was to protect and supplement the future Siege Battery No. 1, *i.e.* to batter the Mori Bastion, and to lead the enemy to suppose that the attack was to be delivered from the North-West.

This Battery for six guns took more than a week to erect, although the work was carried on by day as well as by night, and this owing to the rockiness of the site. It is not surprising, therefore, that General Wilson should have hesitated to accept the Engineers' affirmation that they would build No. 1 Battery, of treble the dimensions, in a single night; on their successful celerity, however, depended the fortune of the entire scheme of attack.

On 10th August—more than three weeks before the completion of this Battery—the long-looked-for Siege Train

[1] Vibart, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–2.

left Ferozpur, and began to drag its long miles of guns and ammunition-carts along the sandy, deeply rutted roads which spanned the miles of sun-baked country separating the great arsenal on the Sutlej from the seat of the Mughals. The desire of the camp went forth to meet it, as did the fears of the mutineers. It being obvious that the latter would make determined efforts to capture it, or, at least, to check its course, a close watch was kept on their movements. On the 14th August—the day on which the Movable Column marched into camp—a large body of soldiery was seen to leave the city and disappear along the Rohtak road. Hodson, at the head of three hundred sabres, started immediately in pursuit, and, with his usual fearless dash, succeeded in dispersing these men, who, he discovered, had not the Siege Train as their quarry but had been sent into the Rohtak district to raise revenue, the rebels in Delhi being sadly in need of money with which to pay the mutineers.

On the 23rd August a rebel force of some 6000 men, with sixteen guns, broke out of the city, and this time there was no doubt that its intention was to intercept the Siege Train. Before dawn next day Nicholson marched at the head of some 2500 men of all arms and sixteen guns to check the execution of this design. Heavy rain falling in sheets had converted the ground to be traversed into a quagmire, through which men, horses, and guns floundered in the hot, thick, semi-darkness, which was only too soon converted by the heat of the sun into the suffused glare of a stormy day in the tropics. The state of the country was such that it was said that no General but Nicholson—except, perhaps, Chamberlain—could have led troops across it. One of the Artillery officers present states that at one time the water was over his horses' backs, and he thought they could not possibly get out of their difficulties; but he looked on, and saw Nicholson's great form riding steadily on as

if nothing were the matter, and he felt sure that all was right.

At five o'clock, after a march of rather more than twelve hours through heavy bogs and alternating bouts of fierce sunshine and drenching rain, the Column came in sight of the enemy, who held a commanding position a mile and three quarters long, of which the centre was a large building with strongly held villages on either side and in its rear; its front and rear were protected by deep water-cuts, which had been converted by rain into wide and swiftly flowing rivers set in morasses. Under John Nicholson's determined leading his tired men closed with the foe, and in less than an hour had routed a Force variously estimated at from 5000 to 8000 men, and had captured all their guns, ordnance stores, baggage, and camp furniture, the Sepoy loss being some 800 men, as against the British 95 killed and wounded. The pursuit of the enemy was checked by the closing night. The victorious Force had to bivouac, without food or shelter, on the field of action, but happily the air was untainted and rain had ceased to fall.

Next day (25th August) the successful troops marched back to camp, dragging thirteen captured guns. They were met by elephants, sent to bring in the wounded and most footsore, and were given a great reception by their comrades in camp. "To Brigadier-General Nicholson's judgment, energy, and determination," wrote General Wilson in his official order, "I mainly attribute the glorious results of the Najafgarh expedition, and next, to the steadiness and gallantry in action and the cheerfulness under great privation and fatigue exhibited by the officers and men placed under his command."

John Lawrence's delight when he heard of this, the first disabling blow the mutineers had yet received at Delhi, was unbounded. "Though sorely harassed with work," he

wrote to Nicholson, "I write a line to congratulate you on your success. I wish I had the power of knighting you on the spot."

Triumph, however, was not the sentiment which swelled the heart of the conquering hero as he moved amongst the acclamations of his fellows in the camp, but sorrow, humility, and aspiration. Two letters from Herbert Edwardes awaited his return, letters which stirred him deeply; they contained an account of the death at Lucknow of their common master, Henry Lawrence. "If it please Providence that I live through this business," wrote John Nicholson to his friend, "you must get me alongside of you again, and be my guide, and help me in endeavouring to follow his example, for I am so weak and unstable that I shall never do any good of myself. I should like to write you a long letter, but I cannot manage it. God be with you, dear Edwardes."[1] This was a side of the fiery autocrat of the camp which was known but to few, and to them it was sacred.

Meanwhile, time passed. Desultory attacks on the Ridge went on as usual. Sickness increased; fever, dysentery, and cholera claimed abundant victims. On the 31st of August there were 2368 men in hospital. Colonel Bourchier, speaking of his own troop in September, writes: "About this time a far more destroying enemy than the enemy's shot and shell attacked my Company; cholera in its worst form broke out among them. It was almost a matter of certainty that every Corps as it arrived in camp went through a course of this terrible disease."[2] It was high time that a decisive move should be made.

The longings of all flew Northwards to the approaching

[1] Lady Edwardes, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 36.

[2] *Eight Months' Campaign during the Mutiny of 1857*, by Colonel George Bourchier, C.B. Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1858, p. 47.

Siege Train. Nicholson wrote to Edwardes on 1st September: "The Siege Train will probably be here in four or five days, and I trust we shall then go in without delay. I doubt if we shall attempt a breach, or anything more than the demolition of the parapet, and the silencing of the fire of such guns as bear on this front. We shall then try to blow in the gateway and escalade at one or two other points."[1] It is surprising to see that the idol of the camp, whose lead the army would follow cheering, "to jahannam" ("to hell"), was excluded from the private councils of the headquarters staff, and was actually ignorant, at so late a date, of the measures composing the Project of Attack, in which the making of two breaches were essential features. The Plan was shown him, however, three days later (4th September), not by General Wilson, but, quite informally, by the Chief Engineer.

Taylor, writing to Dan Robinson on the same day, says: "All is arranged, and, win or lose, a few more days will see the assault on Delhi. I wrote a Project of Attack for Baird Smith; he accepted it, elaborated it, and the General has at last agreed and named the day. Nicholson commands at the assault. It will be a sharp affair, and I think it will be successful. *Bas*,[2] as regards the serious matter before us." Notwithstanding this "bas," he adds over the page, "Nicholson has just had a read at it, and I think it will suit him to a 'T'."

On the same eventful day the long-looked-for Siege Train arrived.

On the previous day Bourchier's Battery and two squadrons of cavalry had been sent out to meet it at Rhei, sixteen miles distant from Delhi. "The stink of dead cattle along the road for the first seven miles," writes

[1] Lady Edwardes, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 48.

[2] Bas = "basta," enough.

Bourchier, "was even worse than when we came to Delhi three weeks before; the rest of the trip was like a holiday, the contrast of the fresh country air being grateful to the senses after the tainted atmosphere we had been inhaling. We had not long to wait before the line of guns, howitzers, and mortar cars, chiefly drawn by elephants, hove in sight, followed by a train of carts drawn by oxen, extending over a distance of eight miles, loaded with shot, shell, and ammunition of every description."[1]

Early next day the long procession began to wind its slow way into camp, amid the cheers of the men who had awaited its coming so painfully and with such ardent expectation. All hearts beat high. The British army was no longer at bay.

Close on the heels of the Siege Train came the Contingent from Jammu, commanded by Richard Lawrence, and Wilde's Rifles—John Lawrence's last contributions. The Chief Commissioner exulted when he heard of their safe arrival. "We ought to have Delhi in our possession within the next ten days," he wrote to Bartle Frere; "we should have it, did Nicholson command! I feel sanguine of success, and that shortly. We cannot afford to delay."[2] To John Nicholson himself, he wrote: "Don't assault until you have given the mutineers all the powder and shot which the Siege Train can spare, and then 'go in,' and may God be with you all."[3]

The crisis was a tremendous one. General Barnard's description of the assault as a gambler's throw understated the case; it was a gambler's throw, *with the dice weighted against the British army.* Some 8000 men in the open against 40,000 in a fortified city! The truth, however,

[1] Bourchier, *op cit.*, pp. 46, 47.
[2] Bosworth Smith, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 205.
[3] *Ibid.*, ii. p. 188.

was that there was no longer any choice. Win or lose, the moment for action had arrived. Not to attack was certain ruin; while determined men maintained that to attack meant victory. The weight of responsibility resting on the General's shoulders was immense. On his judgment depended the lives of his fighting men and the fate of Northern India. It behoved him to move his pieces cautiously.

The first step in Alex Taylor's Project was the occupation of Ludlow Castle. He recommended the seizure of this post before the commencement of Battery No. 1, and this in order to protect both the builders of the Battery, and the Battery itself when erected, from left-flank attack. He believed that this step would be unattended by loss of life; for he had watched the great house systematically since the day on which, finding it deserted, he had entered it alone, and had learned that the carelessness with which it had been held on that occasion was by no means exceptional, and that one picquet *usually* vacated before it was relieved by its successor. Colonel Baird Smith, acting on the information collected by his subordinate, assured General Wilson that it would be easy to secure the building without a struggle, for our troops would have nothing to do but to watch their opportunity and slip in. The General's attitude towards this statement was sceptical. He hesitated to stake the success of the hazardous operation on which he was about to embark on the accuracy of the uncorroborated evidence of a young officer of Engineers. If the latter were incorrect in asserting that the mutineers were holding one of their most important posts with incredible carelessness, then the price in lives of the first step in the Engineer's Plan would be prohibitive. Nor was this all; a bloody struggle for the post would betray the British intention to attack the mutineers' right front. He therefore called for confirmation of

Alex Taylor's account of the occupation of Ludlow Castle, and met with no response. The post was deep in the enemy's land, and no one had visited it.

Then General Nicholson came forward and offered to accompany Alex Taylor to Ludlow Castle that night. The points in question were (*a*), the probable cost in lives of the immediate occupation of Ludlow Castle, a post commanding the future field of operations, then in the hands of the enemy, and (*b*) the reliability of Taylor's general report of the manner in which that ground was held.

The following is Taylor's account of what occurred :— "When the Engineers' report," he writes, "was laid before General Wilson, he doubted that I could possibly have visited Ludlow Castle and the Kudsia Bagh, and questioned the information I gave concerning them, to which, however, he attached so much importance that Nicholson undertook to go to them under my guidance and to report the result. Accordingly I took him *at midnight* into Ludlow Castle, which we had the good fortune to find unoccupied ; then to the Kudsia Bagh ; and, finally, I got him safely back to camp. Of the nature of his report I can have no doubt, for I never afterwards heard of any objection to my Project."

Surely there is no episode in modern warfare more irregular and romantic than this stealthy visit, made in the hot darkness of that tropical night by the fiery young Brigadier and the younger and equally ardent officer of Engineers to posts which were in the heart of the enemy's land. Neither the General to whom India looked to take Delhi, nor the man who had evolved the Plan by which the mutineers' stronghold was eventually taken, were men who ought to have been prowling about outside the camp at midnight alone, with lives, on which so much depended, in their hands. Certainly nothing could have been more characteristic of the two eager Irishmen of Scottish descent

concerned, than the precise blend of determination, recklessness, and prudence embodied in this act. Alex Taylor knew that the Ludlow House picquet usually left at midnight, and was seldom punctually replaced; he had proved this at the risk of his own life more than once. If Nicholson were willing, and thought the game worth the candle, as he himself had done, he was perfectly ready to conduct him personally on to the field. He must have breathed more freely, however, when he got the precious leader safely back behind our own picquets before the sun rose on the hot Sunday which inaugurated the siege-week.

This visit saved the situation. General Wilson accepted Alex Taylor's account of the manner in which Ludlow Castle was held, acted on his recommendation, and gave his final sanction to the Project. On Sunday night Ludlow Castle was approached, not by two officers, but by a large body of British troops.

It would seem that the history of the preliminaries to the occupation of Ludlow Castle was never generally known in camp. Those behind the scenes were well aware that secrecy was essential to success. The tale of this midnight reconnaissance in which John Nicholson and Alex Taylor were protagonists was buried in silence. The older Engineer officers, even, were ignorant of it, as is shown by Medley's comments on the erection of Battery No. 1. "The ground on its left," he writes, "had been taken possession of the night before, by the seizure of Ludlow Castle and Kudsia Bagh, which were occupied by strong picquets. Pandy must have been taken by surprise, for he made no resistance."

It is difficult at this distance of time to name those to whom it was known. To Wilson, Nicholson, and Taylor, of course, and certainly to Baird Smith and Chamberlain. Nicholson died soon after the assault, and on his death-bed endeavoured to avert a certain miscarriage of justice, the

likelihood of which he foresaw. Taylor's Chief was silent. Sir Neville Chamberlain, however—who probably heard the story from Nicholson's own lips—alludes to Nicholson's share in the incident in a letter to Herbert Edwardes, written from Delhi a month after the death of their heroic friend. The passage in question, occurs in a letter written from Delhi on 25th October, and runs as follows: "Had it not been for his (Nicholson's) going down that night, I believe we might have had to capture, at considerable loss of life, the positions which he was certainly the main cause of our occupying without resistance."[1]

This event of happy omen inaugurated a new phase of the struggle before Delhi. Behind the soldiers on the Ridge lay months of waiting for the hour which would see them strong enough to strike; that hour was now at hand, an hour which few doubted would be that of victory. But alas! among the few was the General. "It is evident to me," he wrote, "that the results of the proposed operations will be thrown on the hazard of a die; but, under the circumstances in which I am placed I am willing to try this hazard, the more so, as I cannot suggest any other plan to meet our difficulties. I cannot, however, help being of the opinion that the chances of success under such a heavy fire as the working parties will be exposed to, are anything but favourable. I yield, however, to the judgment of the Chief Engineer."[2] The Engineers accepted this assent with exultation, and the siege operations began.

[1] Forrest, *Sir N. Chamberlain*, *op. cit.*, p. 370.
[2] Kaye and Malleson, *op. cit.*, iv. p. 4.

CHAPTER IX

THE SIEGE

THE following is the sequence of some of the chief events of the siege.

On 10th August the Siege Train left Ferozpur; on the 13th the Movable Column commanded by John Nicholson arrived in camp; on the 20th the Plan of Attack was shown to General Wilson; on the 25th the action of Najafgarh took place; on the 31st there were 2368 men in hospital.

On 3rd September Remmington's Battery was completed; on 4th the Plan of Attack was shown to General Nicholson, and the Siege Train arrived. On the 5th the Jammu Contingent arrived; General Nicholson and Captain Taylor visited Ludlow Castle towards midnight; and the numbers in hospital rose to 2977.

On the night of the 6th September Ludlow Castle was occupied, and a light Battery near "Remmington's" was completed. The latter was destined to co-operate with Remmington's in distracting the enemy's attention from No. 1, while that Battery was under construction, and in encouraging the mutineers to believe that our attack would be delivered from the right. On the same night the Engineers filled 16,000 sand-bags on the enemy's ground, and concealed them in the neighbourhood of the future Battery No. 1.

On the 7th September Wilson's Address to the Army

was issued, a sign that the end was at hand. In this manifesto, the troops are reminded of their splendid traditions and of the great issue at stake; and are informed that they will be required to "aid the Engineers in the erection of the Batteries, in the digging of trenches, and in daily exposure to the sun as covering parties." The "Major-General"—so the address runs—"calls upon the officers of the Force to lend their zealous and efficient co-operation in the erection of the works of the siege to be commenced. He looks especially to the regimental officers of all grades to impress upon their men that to work in the trenches during the siege is as necessary and honourable as to fight in the ranks during a battle. He will hold all officers responsible for their utmost being done to carry out the directions of the Engineers, and he confidently trusts that all will exhibit a healthy and hearty spirit of emulation and zeal, from which he has no doubt that the happiest results will follow in the brilliant termination of all their labours."[1]

On the 7th the last of John Lawrence's reinforcements arrived—the 4th Panjab Infantry commanded by Alfred Wilde. They had marched from the Yusafzai frontier to Delhi, a distance of more than six hundred miles, at the rate of twenty-eight miles a day, and were greeted by the ringing cheers of their comrades in the camp as they swung in, their rifles at the trail, their eyes and teeth gleaming, and the fierce faces underneath their *pagris* lit with smiles.

Meanwhile, the fire of life burned brightly in the Engineer camp. The Corps was well aware that the fate of the British Empire at this critical juncture depended on its corporate determination and professional ability, and there was not a man in it who was not determined to rise to the height of his opportunities.

For some time the Sapper grounds had been the field of

[1] Kaye, *op. cit.*, iii. p. 556.

feverish activity. Experiments had been made in the erection of various types of siege-work; the eight hundred newly recruited Mazbi Sikhs had been carefully exercised in the execution of the tasks it would eventually be their duty to fulfil, against time, and under fire, viz. the erection of Batteries, the placing of platforms, the making of field magazines, etc.; hundreds of almost untrained pioneers were practised in the making of trenches, and the throwing up of earth-works. Siege materials on an immense scale were prepared—platforms, scaling ladders, sand-bags (100,000), gabions (10,000), fascines (10,000), etc.; time-studies were made in the lading and unlading of bullock-carts, mules, and camels, the latter more than 1500 in number. Every eventuality was foreseen; everything was prepared, organised, and carefully rehearsed. Nothing was left to chance.

This difficult and anxious work was performed by a Corps undermined by sickness. Writing on the 5th of September, Colonel Baird Smith, who was exceedingly ill, described himself as only kept going by brandy, as "dazed," and as having "to pitch into chalk and opium." Henry Brownlow, the Director of the Engineer Park, writes: "During the ten days immediately preceding the Assault, I, literally, 'lived in my boots,' changing my clothes and having a good scrub down once a day; eating and sleeping when, and where, I could; living on bread, milk, eggs, tea, quinine, and chlorodyne, and doing as much of my work as I could on a fast steady pony, with my kamarband pulled very tight round my poor stomach."[1] Of the remaining twenty-five officers of the Brigade seven were incapacitated

[1] The following entries in Henry Brownlow's diary illuminate both the writer's physical condition and the character of the work done in the Engineer's camp:—

"Thursday, Aug. 27. *In Park all morning, loading fascines on camels experimentally.* At 12, to call with Chesney on Colonel Thomson about camels. Rumour in camp of a massacre at Lucknow, and repulse of Have-

for duty on the day of the Assault by either sickness or wounds.

Fortunately, however, Alex Taylor was in exuberant health. The excitement of the life and the importance of the stakes for which all were playing kept him on the crest of the wave. A letter written by him to Dan Robinson on the 4th—after the arrival of the Siege Train, and after Nicholson had received his Project of Attack with enthusiasm—is of amazing buoyancy. He writes like a school-boy out for a holiday, and eventually apologises for the "chaff" and "humbug" with which he has overwhelmed his correspondent. He was evidently highly elated by the prospect of the critical struggle on which he and his comrades were just about to embark, a struggle which would try their manhood to the uttermost, and which was to be conducted on a plan of his devising. This light-hearted optimism, based as it

lock's force. In afternoon making *arrangements about carrying fascines, etc., for Siege-Batteries with Taylor.*

"Friday, 28th. *Lading camels all evening to practise them in carrying fascines.*

"Saturday, 29th. To Hindu Rao's and new Battery with Taylor.

"Sunday, 30th. To new Battery with Taylor. Warrand struck. Lading camels in evening.

"Monday, Sept. 1. Warrand doing well. Sickness greatly on increase. Only nine Artillery officers fit for duties in Batteries! Watching Warrand at night.

"Tuesday, Sept. 2. Watching Warrand till 10 a.m. Park all morning. Shell from enemy's Battery left bank of river burst in Metcalfe's stables, killing and wounding nine Europeans and four natives. Hot day. *Experimental Battery made at night in rear of Park.*

"Wednesday, 3rd. Heat intense. In Park. Seedy.

"Thursday, 4th. Escalade practice in Park. Dinner in Taylor's tent. Slept in Warrand's. Beatson's death (cholera), Cawnpore. Poor little Cora! (His cousin, see vol. ii. p. 87.)

"Friday, 5th. Hindu Rao's and Batteries with Taylor. Seedy; obliged to go to bed.

"Saturday, 6th. Seedy. In Taylor's tent. Heat intense and sickness increasing.

"Sunday, 7th. Able to move about a little, but very weak and seedy."

was on an iron will and physique, unfailing resource, and cautious daring made him an ideal leader of a desperate adventure. No wonder the "younger officers of the Engineers swore by him."[1]

Time passed. At last the setting sun reddened the West on the evening of Sunday the 7th, and Taylor started for the site of No. 1 Battery. That night was to test the practicability of his Project. On the way down he was overtaken by a junior subordinate, George Medley, one of his Lahore-Peshawar Road-Engineers; he also met Fred Maunsell, the Engineer officer directing the right attack, and therefore in charge of the construction of the great right Battery. This officer, who had visited the site with him previously, and had received full instructions, had already traced the Battery, and was now returning for his working parties. Taylor was amused to hear from him that the setting sun had gilded one of the sides of the Mori Bastion, thus giving him the very distinct lines of direction of which Pasley advises the Engineer to take thankful advantage when this circumstance occurs.

The fleeting tropical twilight sank rapidly into a darkness illuminated by stars and fire-flies; and very soon all the workers were on the scene of their labours—Taylor, Maunsell, the working parties, and the officers and non-commissioned officers on duty. Reid's Gurkhas—who formed the covering parties—had also taken up their positions. This Battery No. 1 was designed in two parts, one of which—the right wing or flank—was what is technically called an elevated Battery, and was destined to hold six guns laid on the Mori Bastion; while the other—the left wing, a half-sunken Battery—rested on the deep, dry stream-bed already spoken of, which formed a sort of natural second parallel and ran into the river to the rear of the sites of the

[1] Kaye, *op. cit.*, iii. p. 573.

future Breaching Batteries; this wing was designed to hold four 24-pounders destined to crush the fire from the Kashmir Bastion, and to veto the making of sorties from the Kashmir Gate.

The scene was dramatic. "The moon rose at ten on a busy scene," writes Medley, in his vivid account of the siege; "hundreds of camels arriving, dropping their loads, and returning; and hundreds of men as busy as bees, raising a formidable work, which was to be finished and ready to open fire *in the morning*, otherwise its subsequent completion would have been no easy matter. The work was progressing merrily, when suddenly a bright flash from the Mori, a loud report, and a heavy shower of grape literally ploughed up the ground on which we were working, knocking over several men. After a short interval, another equally well-aimed shower came down, and upset some more men. Singular to relate, however, Pandy, who, of course, couldn't tell how well he was shooting, seemed quite content, and only fired one more shot during the whole night, being, in fact, in perfect ignorance of what we were about. If he heard a noise, he probably thought it was one of our ordinary working-parties cutting brushwood.[1] So, with a deep sigh of relief, the work went on rapidly.

The night was very hot, but we had taken care to bring plenty of drink with us, and the excitement prevented anyone feeling fatigued until the work was over. I went up to

[1] Throughout the occupation of the Ridge, trees had been cut down in large quantities for the making of fascines, and also in order to clear away the cover in the neighbourhood of "posts" and batteries. "For about a fortnight prior to the commencement of the Siege-Batteries large working parties were sent out to cut down the trees and bushes near the sites proposed, and, from letters written at the period, I find that the supervision of these parties was considered most arduous. The men were at work from dusk to dawn, groping and stumbling about in the long rank jungle, wet through with rain and dew, and frequently attacked by the enemy."—Thackeray, *op. cit.* (*Two Indian Campaigns*), p. 73.

Hindu Rao's, got some tea, and met the Artillery officer, who wanted to know when we should be ready for his guns. On returning, I found we had at length got rid of our camels, but now long strings of artillery carts laden with shot, shell, etc., began to arrive, and, as bullocks and bullock-drivers are particularly stupid creatures, I am afraid there was a considerable amount of cursing and swearing in getting these stores over the rough ground into the Battery. Then came the huge guns, drawn by twenty pairs of bullocks each, and the sort of smothered row that ensued beggars description. At three o'clock the place presented a scene of awful confusion: Sappers, Pioneers, Artillerymen, and Infantry, all mixed up together with an inert mass of carts, guns, and bullocks, struggling together in a heap. Scarcely another hour remained before daylight, and then we knew what we might expect from the irate enemy, when he saw what our amusement had been during the night. The confusion, however, was apparent, but not real; everybody knew what his work was, and everybody did it. Men and officers worked like horses, and the chaotic mass of carts and animals cleared off to camp; the Artillery stowed their ammunition in the magazines, and, as fast as our platforms were ready, the guns were dragged into position."[1]

When the darkness brightened to dawn, and the night —which had been packed with the confused and multitudinous movement of crowds of men and animals, excitement and suppressed noise—gave place to day, it was seen that, though the Battery was built and the ammunition stored, only one gun was in its place, and that the platforms for the others were yet to place; and this in spite of the determined efforts of the "inexhaustible Alex Taylor," of Fred Maunsell, and of every member of that gallant body of workers.

[1] Medley, *op. cit.*, pp. 75 ff.

"We were now obliged to let the great bulk of the working party go, as they were quite done up," continues Medley, "for to have crossed the space between them and the camp in open daylight would have been certain destruction. . . . With the first break of day the enemy saw what we'd been at, and then we *caught* it! The Mori Bastion sent round after round of shot and grape at us, so that almost every man who ventured from the protection of the Battery was knocked over. The few workmen kept to finish the remaining platforms were quite cowed, and volunteers were called for from among the Europeans."[1]

Maunsell and his men worked on steadily and doggedly, while Major James Brind, R.A.—on whom the much-coveted honour of opening the attack on Delhi had been worthily bestowed—dragged one of his howitzers out *into the open*, and, unprotected, responded to the enemy's fire. "We talk of Victoria Crosses," cried one of his brother-officers, in an outburst of generous admiration, "Brind ought to be covered with them from head to foot."

The enemy's guns on the Mori were not the only source of the fire to which our men were exposed. The mutineers brought out light guns and ran a trench parallel to the front of the Battery, from which they kept up a constant and most harassing flow of musketry fire; cavalry sorties, also, were made from the Lahore Gate; all three sources of annoyance were kept in check, however, by the guns from the Ridge, by two light field guns brought down from the Ridge by Brind, and by covering parties.

The day wore on; the sun rose high in the heavens; and the Angel of Death was lavish of his leaden summons—seventy men were killed in the trenches—but platform after platform was steadily erected, and presently No. 1 Battery "fired its first salvo on the Mori Bastion, amid the cheers of

[1] Medley, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

groups of officers and men on the Ridge, who had collected to be present at the opening of the ball!"[1] It was the beginning of the end, and a thrilling moment. The rebels stood manfully to their guns, but ere noon had declined to afternoon the Mori Bastion took on a dilapidated appearance, the fire of its guns slackened, and gradually sunk into something like silence; but for a time only, however, for on the 12th—four days later—Charles Reid wrote: "We are still hard at work breaching; the Mori not yet silent, although it is almost knocked to pieces. I never saw such plucky gunners in my life. Fight it out they will, and every gunner *will* be killed at his gun."

While the right wing of No. 1 Battery pounded the Mori Bastion, its left wing battered the Kashmir Gate and Bastion, on to which the hollow throats of its four 24-pounders poured their iron hail for the better part of three days; on the 10th, however, its parapets caught fire, and, having been built largely of fascines for speed's sake, rapidly blazed out of being, not, however, before it had done its work of dismantling the Kashmir Bastion. Its pyre was not ungraced by the bright bird of heroism; humble bhisties (native water-carriers) exposed themselves bravely as they crossed and re-crossed the plain, under fire, carrying the needed water; they brought it in such insufficient quantities, however, that the men in the blazing Battery and in the trenches were forced to devise some substitute: leaping on to the parapets with sand-bags in their arms—a target for the guns on the walls and for the musketry in the enemy's trenches—they endeavoured in vain to extinguish the flames under streams of sand.

The name of one of these heroes has been preserved. Charles Reid writes: "Lieutenant Lockhart and two Gurkhas in the trenches of our Batteries jumped on to

[1] MS., General Sir Frederick Maunsell, K.C.B., R.E.

the parapet, followed by six or seven Gurkhas, who tried their uttermost to smother the flames with sand. Two of the Gurkhas fell down, and Lockhart rolled over the parapet with a frightful gunshot wound in the jaw, which was smashed to pieces. He lay on the ground some little time, then tried to jump on to the parapet a second time but, at length, fell, from loss of blood and exhaustion."[1]

Nor did our brave soldiers fight men and the devices of men only, but the elements also: the heat of the September sun was exceptional on the 8th, and in the afternoon they were choked and blinded by a sandstorm.[2]

The erection of this Battery in a single night—a feat unsurpassed in the annals of the Engineers—was a triumph, not only of character over adverse circumstances—as is usual with British triumphs—but of foresight. If the Engineer Corps had not been so perfectly organised, if the little group of trained Sappers had been less efficient, if the many slightly-trained human agents whom Lieutenant Maunsell had no choice but to employ had not been forced to rehearse the rôle they were to play that night, so often and so carefully, then no courage, no determination, and no gallantry would have made it possible to erect that Battery in so short a time. As it was, the organisation, and the manner in which the trained workers handled those

[1] "Here, indeed," Reid adds, "was a gallant action which I witnessed myself, and a noble example set to all around, and which I considered worthy of the Victoria Cross, for which I recommended it in one of my pencil reports to the General. This, unfortunately, like many others written under fire at Hindu Rao's House, was destroyed, as they were not considered official! I tried afterwards to obtain the Victoria Cross for this noble officer, but I regret to say did not succeed."

[2] "Tuesday, 8th September.—The enemy came out in great force this morning to attack the new Battery and to drive us out of the Kudsia Bagh. . . . I fear the poor men in the Battery have suffered very much from the heat, for it was *very* hot and sunny until an hour ago, when we had a blinding sand-storm."—Keith Young, *op. cit.*, 269.

who were untrained, were perfect, and success crowned the joint efforts of the Corps.

No. 1 Battery having proved itself able to play its part, it was possible to begin the construction of the Breaching Batteries proper.

The task of cleaving a way into the city was entrusted to a group of Batteries (Nos. 2, 3, 4) on the left of the British position. These were erected respectively, as has been already stated, in front of Ludlow Castle (2); near the Kudsia Bagh (4); and in the precincts of the Customs House (3). Their objectives were the Kashmir Bastion and adjoining curtain (Nos. 2 and 4), and the Water Bastion and adjoining curtain (3).

No. 2 Battery had been traced simultaneously with the erection of No. 1 Battery on the night of the 7th, by Lieutenants Greathed, Lang, and Thackeray under Alex Taylor's immediate direction, the preliminary step of filling sand-bags and storing them in its neighbourhood for future use being taken at the same time. The Engineers, however, had learned from the great effort involved in the construction of No. 1 Battery, that the erection of a large Battery during the few hours separating the dusk of evening from the dawn of the following day was not really practicable, and were prepared to devote three nights to its construction.

On the night of the 8th the erection of these Breaching Batteries began in desperate earnest.

No. 2, the *great* Breaching Battery, was placed in front of Ludlow Castle, at a distance of some five hundred yards from the Kashmir Bastion, and, like No. 1 Battery, consisted of two wings connected by trenches. It mounted eighteen heavy guns. Lieutenant Medley, with two other officers of his Corps, worked on its right wing during the following night (9th), and has left the following description of his experiences: "I went to the trenches at about

5 p.m. to find the Directing Engineer, and to see what had to be done, the other officers following with the workmen as soon as it was dusk. I found the Directing Engineer in the Kudsia Bagh, into which a fair supply of shot and shell was being thrown by the enemy, the trees getting well peppered, most of the firing being high. Our men, however—who had got quite accustomed to it—were eating their dinners very comfortably inside the different gateways and buildings which gave them shelter. Greathed, the Directing Engineer, and myself went across to Ludlow Castle, and laid out the embrasures for the Battery, Pandy, who was skirmishing in the broken ground in front, making shocking bad shots at us. A little before dark, the working party came down, and we all set to work like men to complete the Battery by morning. It was very hot work, standing or walking about all night, but we had plenty of claret, which is a comforting drink in such a case. In the middle of the night, down came the guns, and we hauled them in behind the solid parts of the Battery till the platforms were ready. The embrasures were then masked in front, so that the whole thing looked innocent enough from the outside."

Taylor had intended to place No. 3 Battery in the Kudsia Bagh, but to his dismay the site—chosen under circumstances already described[1]—proved unsuitable. Another had to be found. He immediately thought of the old Custom House and its outhouses, and made his way thither, the bullets tearing the leaves of the trees about him into shreds. As he expected, he found that a small ruined building which had been an office of the Custom House, answered his purpose. "This Custom House," writes Medley, "was a large building, only 160 yards from the left or Water Bastion, and the enemy, with the most unaccount-

[1] See *ante*, p. 258.

able negligence, had neither destroyed nor occupied it. We took possession immediately. It was determined to make the Battery *inside* the aforesaid office, the front wall of which would effectually conceal our works and give a kind of protection to the workmen. This same night, accordingly, the work was begun; but to make a Battery 160 yards from an enemy, with his men lining the walls within easy musket-shot, was a task that required no ordinary nerve and skill. . . . Pandy did not know what we were at, but, at any rate, he knew that people were working in that direction, and he served out such a liberal supply of musketry and shell all night that the working party lost thirty-nine men, killed and wounded. The courage with which the men worked was wonderful. They were merely the unarmed native pioneers, and not meant to be fighting men. With the passive courage so common to natives, as man after man was knocked over, they would stop a moment, weep a little over their fallen friend, pop his body in the row along with the rest, and then work on as before. Of course at daylight this, like all the working parties, was withdrawn, or every man must have been destroyed."

On the afternoon of the 10th, Lieutenants Medley and Tandy were sent to finish the right wing of No. 2 Battery. The men of their working party were drawn from two British Infantry regiments—as all the Sappers and Miners available were employed on No. 3, the construction of which presented unexpected difficulties—and were so exhausted by the heat and heavy unaccustomed work that, although the Battery was incomplete, it was found necessary to send them back to camp at midnight. Taylor, however, succeeded in getting them replaced by 120 men of the Kashmir Contingent—the "rose-buds," as John Lawrence called them—who had arrived in camp that day. "They

came down armed to the teeth with matchlocks, swords, and shields," says Medley, "and did not fancy being told to pile arms, and fill and carry sand-bags, so we just set to work ourselves to set them the example. The native officers followed suit, and the men soon worked right well. At half-past three or four a.m. the enemy suddenly opened a rattling fire of musketry on us from the ground in front, and, before I could stop them, my valiant workmen flew to their arms, and opened such a fire in return, that, being in front, I expected to be shot every minute. As the only way of stopping this abominable row, we forcibly ejected them from the cover of the parapet, telling them to fire away in the open if they wanted to fight, for the Battery was made for guns, and not for Infantry."

Meanwhile No. 4 Mortar Battery, in the Kudsia Bagh—commanded by Henry Tombs—had already opened fire and played throughout the night of the 10th on the curtain connecting the Water- and Kashmir Bastions. The fracas of the "rose-buds," therefore, was overarched by the course of "shell after shell, traceable by its lighted fuse from its first bang, when it left the mortar, to the thundering report with which it fell and burst among the enemy." The din was horrible.

The Artillery officers came down at dawn; when their guns were placed, it was necessary to unmask the embrasures, a most dangerous task under the circumstances. Medley called for volunteers, and some Dogras[1] came forward cheerfully and upset the covering sand-bags.

At 8 a.m. on the 11th all was ready, and the Great Breaching Battery opened fire. Lieutenant Roberts—then known to his friends as "Little Bobs"[2]—who had charge

[1] Hillmen.

[2] Now Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, V.C., K.G., P.C., K.P., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., D.C.L., LL.D.

of two guns in the left wing, gives a vivid account of the thrilling moment when the breaching fire was opened at close quarters on to the ramparts which had sheltered the mutineers so long and so effectively: "As the shots told, and the stones flew into the air and rattled down," he writes, "a loud cheer burst from the Artillerymen and some of the men of the Carabineers and 9th Lancers who had volunteered to work in the Batteries. The enemy had got our range with wonderful accuracy, and, immediately on the screen in front of the right gun being removed, a round shot came through the embrasure knocking two or three of us over. . . . We never left the Battery until the day of the Assault—the 14th—except to go by turns to Ludlow Castle for our meals. Night and day the overwhelming fire continued; and the incessant boom and roar of guns and mortars, with the ceaseless rain of shot and shell on the city, warned the mutineers that their punishment was at hand. We were not, however, allowed to have it all our own way. Unable to fire a gun from any of the three bastions we were breaching, the enemy brought guns into the open and enfiladed our Batteries. They sent rockets from their Martello towers, and they maintained a perfect storm of musketry from their advanced trench and from the city walls. No part of the attack was left unsearched by their fire, and though three months' incessant practice had made our men skilful in using any cover they had, our losses were numerous; 327 officers and men being killed and wounded between the 7th and 14th September."[1]

"As the site of the breach was struck by the iron hail,"

[1] Roberts, *op. cit.*, vol. i. pp. 220, 221. Nearly fifty years later, and in another continent, Lieutenant Fred Roberts of the 60th Rifles, son of the Lieutenant Fred Roberts who served in Battery No. 2 during the second week of September 1857, lost his life in a very gallant attempt to rescue some guns abandoned during the battle of Colenzo. *Tel père, tel fils.*

says George Medley, who was also present on this great occasion, "great blocks of stone fell, and the curtain-wall tumbled clattering into the ditch. . . . Ten minutes after the howitzers had followed suit, the Kashmir Bastion was silenced; and then it was a fine sight to see the stonework crumbling under the storm of shot and shell, the breach getting larger and larger, and the 8-inch shells, made to burst just as they touched the parapet, bringing down whole yards at a time."

After the Batteries were completed a party of Sappers was attached to each, in case their services should be needed.

It fell to Medley's lot to return on the 12th to the howitzer wing of this same Battery (No. 2). He describes the twenty-four hours he spent in it with Fred Roberts, as the most unpleasant of his life. "The enemy," he writes, "now thoroughly alive to his danger, lined his advanced trenches with men, and threw crowds of skirmishers over the broken ground and jungle in front, who maintained one incessant storm of musketry into the Batteries all day long, rendering it most dangerous to venture, even for a minute, beyond the protection of the parapets. Every now and then they were so annoying and became so bold that the Artillery officers substituted grape for round shot in the guns, and ploughed the ground to their front with the iron shower. The ground was so favourable to our opponents, however, that this only checked their approach, and scarcely diminished the severity of their fire.

The light guns they had got to play on us from the Martello towers and from holes knocked in the curtain-walls also, caused great annoyance; they fired at us with perfect impunity. . . . A shell from one of these guns burst in the Battery during the course of the day and severely wounded five of the men, two of whom, I believe, died. Many men

fell from the musketry. I was twice hit by splinters of the stones thrown into the Battery by round shot striking a low wall outside. The narrow escapes that all had were numerous.

But a more serious annoyance than all these yet remains to be described. The enemy had constructed a Battery beyond our extreme right, and from this—placed so well, that our old Ridge guns could not see it—he enfiladed No. 1 and No. 2 Batteries with fearful effect. The fire in front could be seen and replied to; but it was very trying to the nerves to see the Battery raked from end to end almost every half-hour by the shot of an 18-pounder, which came tearing through, upsetting everything in its course, and smashing many a brave fellow. I lengthened the right epaulement, and constructed an additional traverse, which somewhat protected us; but the fire was still so severe, that at length we had to withdraw a gun from playing on the breach, and put it in the epaulement in order to keep down the enfilade fire if possible. General Wilson, in fact, at one time determined to make a rush at these guns from the right and spike or capture them, but they were within grape-shot of the walls, were difficult to get at, and the loss of life would probably have been heavy; whereas, if our Artillerymen could only hold on for another twenty-four hours, it was hoped that the work would be done."

Another twenty-four hours!

"So the day wore on," he continues; "the heat was very great, but the excitement of the scene almost prevented it being felt. The men's dinner and beer came into the Batteries and were heartily enjoyed, and in the evening sundry scared figures in white came running into the place, one by one, and proved to be our *khidmatgars*, bringing the officers' dinners. And it is only fair to this

much-abused class of servants to record how bravely they behaved in this respect. There were very few who, even when their masters' posts were most dangerous, ever hesitated to bring them their dinners as regularly as clock-work. . . . After discussing our dinners, pipes were lighted, and the officer commanding in the Battery made arrangements for a mild sort of firing to be kept up through the night, while the Artillery, in general, lay down to sleep away their day's fatigue. So thoroughly did one get accustomed to the row, and so great was the fatigue, that the regular discharge of the guns fired through the night within ten feet of the sleeper would not disturb his repose. Meanwhile, my working party for the night had come down, and the damage done to the embrasures by the day's firing was repaired before morning. Pandy's fire always slackened very much at night, though it never ceased, so we worked away very comfortably."

During this twenty-four hours (September 12–13) this howitzer Battery, being largely built of fascines, took fire several times. It was the Engineer officers' duty to extinguish the flames. "All the Batteries," says Medley, "were very inflammable, from their peculiar formation, and they several times took fire from the discharge of our own guns. It was, of course, the Engineers' duty when this took place, to jump on to the parapet, or stand in the embrasures, and put it out, for which purpose chatties of water were kept ready-filled. I had to do this six or eight times, and there was a strange kind of excitement about it; one knew that every musket within range was turned on one at the time—a fact which quite took away fear, though it made one very glad to jump down again on to the platform. . . .

At 5 a.m. Lang came down to take *his* twenty-four hours, and I departed to camp, glad enough to find myself with a whole skin, when so many had been knocked over, and to

have a few hours' rest before encountering fresh fatigues. This was the morning of the 13th."

Meanwhile unexpected difficulties had delayed the opening of No. 3 Battery. It had been built, as has been seen, on the night of the 9th, behind a wall which had served as an excellent screen while it was under construction, but the demolition of which under fire proved a long and difficult affair, attended by many casualties. This task was not completed until the morning of the 12th. Its guns were dragged from the rear under a hail of musketry from the city walls, and placed in the Battery in broad daylight—a feat unrivalled even in the annals of the Horse Artillery.

"At 11 a.m.," says George Medley, "the left Battery (No. 3) was at length finished, and ready to open fire. The task of unmasking the embrasures in broad daylight, and under a close musketry fire from the walls, was done in the bravest manner by Greathed of the Engineers and some of our Purbia Sappers, and in another minute the six guns opened fire. The effect of these guns playing at 160 yards' distance on the Water Bastion was tremendous. The enemy's guns were dismounted or smashed almost immediately, the opposing face of the bastion was beaten into a shapeless mass, the parapet sent flying about in fragments, and in a few hours the breach seemed almost practicable. But though the enemy could not show a gun in reply, he poured such a close and hot musketry fire from the walls into the Battery, that at that short distance the air seemed literally alive with bullets. To enter the Battery from the Kudsia Bagh picquet was a service of great danger, though the distance to be run was scarcely a hundred yards. Fortunately, a dip in the ground screened us somewhat. Many valuable lives were lost in this hot post. . . .

This Battery was also exposed to an enfilading fire from Pandy's guns across the river, though—on account of the

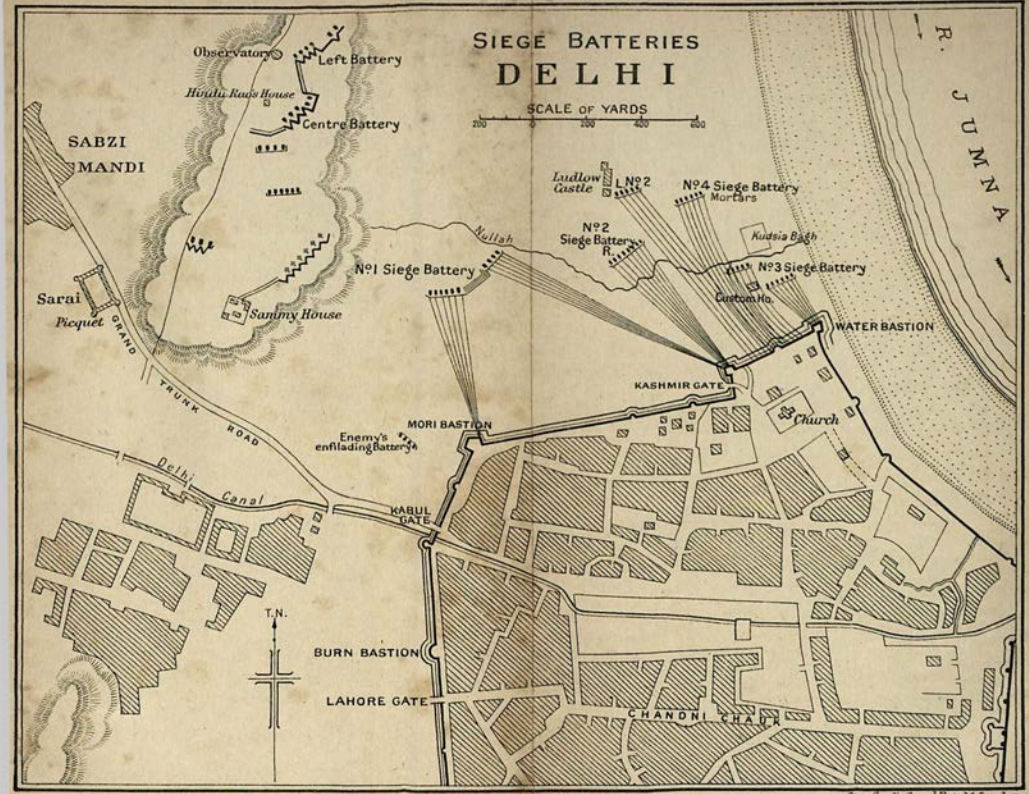
distance—not to anything like the extent of the others on the right. But all were more or less fired into from the front, and on both flanks, and never were guns better or more unflinchingly served. Exhausted by the heat, and worn out by the constant work and exposure, the Artillery officers and men felt that the army was waiting for them to beat down the walls that had looked defiantly at us so long, and to open a road for them into Delhi. Undismayed by the terrible list of casualties from the enemy's fire, they poured an uninterrupted storm of shot and shell on the devoted fortifications; and, in spite of the vigour of the defence, we saw that every gun, howitzer, and mortar was effecting its object."

Throughout the next day—Sunday the 13th—the two great Breaching Batteries—Nos. 2 and 3—maintained their tremendous fire, and the enemy, in return, kept up a still hotter fire than before on the Batteries. Our casualties were numerous and the Artillerymen thoroughly exhausted. Unpleasant contingencies were in view. The enemy *might* open fresh guns on us from the curtain where we knew he was busy at work. The enfilading fire on the right *might* be so considerably increased as to render our Batteries no longer tenable. It was hoped, therefore, that by evening the breaching would be practicable, and that the assault might be delivered next morning.

"It was late in the afternoon,"[1] writes Arthur Lang[2]

[1] "A little after three," is the hour given by Medley, but "it was certainly later," says Arthur Lang.

[2] Arthur Lang, then a tall, good-looking youth in his early twenties who was passing triumphantly through his first initiation into the mysteries of the God of War, speaks of the horror and excitement of that long tropical day in the Battery as phenomenal. "Never again," he says, though his after experience of war was considerable, did he see "such mangling wounds" as those then inflicted by the enemy's round shot from Kishanganj, which, running obliquely through the Battery, tore the limbs off the fine young "mothers' sons" serving there, flinging the gallant creatures to the ground, mere human wreckage, to which the best one could wish was death.



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in the diary he kept irregularly throughout the Siege, "and the Artillerymen were declaring they would not spend another day in that Battery, when Nicholson and Taylor appeared on the scene. They had come to inspect the breach, with which, much to our relief, they pronounced themselves satisfied. I was not surprised, therefore, when Taylor called me aside, and told me to visit it at dusk, and report on its condition. As I cannot see in the dark —some fellows can—I asked as a favour to be allowed to do the work at once. Taylor exchanged a few words with Nicholson, said 'All right' with a nod, gave me a note for the officer commanding at Kudsia Bagh, and told me to make my own arrangements." The guns in No. 2 Battery ceased firing, the gallant young fellow ran to Kudsia Bagh, saw the officer in charge there, asked that the firing from that Battery and the covering parties might cease, borrowed four riflemen, passed No. 3 Battery, slipped through the dense cover of the orange gardens stretching Southwards from the Custom House, and soon found himself opposite the breach in the face of Kashmir Bastion. He extended his men there, and, leaving them in the shelter of the vegetation, ran quickly up the smooth ascending slope of the shot-and-bullet-swept glacis, a distance of about sixty yards. Arriving, mercifully untouched, at its crest, he lay down promptly, thus presenting as small a target as possible to the musketry fire concentrated on his person both from the ramparts and from the flanking breastworks erected by the mutineers outside the Kashmir Bastion.

While thus recumbent, he examined the breach, which naturally—the fire directed on it from our Batteries having only just ceased—was free from obstruction of any kind (*chevaux-de-frise*, wire entanglements, and the like); noted its height, width, and character; observed that the berm had been so encroached on by debris as to present a

dangerously narrow base to scaling ladders; saw that the ditch was open, and the breach not only practicable, but practicable *without* ladders—an important point, as a ladder carried by men presented a large target to the enemy, and one on which the mutineers were sure to concentrate their fire.

The enemy, of course, had been totally unprepared for Lang's rush up the glacis, and they had had but a small object on which to aim while he lay on his face at a stone's-throw from them, and examined the ditch; they all knew perfectly, however, that he would presently rise to withdraw, and they waited for this, their moment, as they covered the spot on which he lay. Presently he leapt smartly to his feet, rose to his full height, and "legged it down the slope for all he was worth." The firing was bad, as was also the powder used; Lang ran well, and, though a driving hail of bullets swept the slope, he reached the orange-trees and his supports, untouched.

The five men then fell back on Kudsia Bagh, but their dangers were not at an end. The sentries outside that post, who knew of Lang's reconnaissance, had been relieved during his absence, and their successors—who had been left in ignorance of what was in progress—hearing men moving stealthily among the trees, received the returning party with a volley of musketry. Fortunately they shot badly also, and hit no one. Soon Arthur Lang found himself *en route* for the camp in order to make his report.

Alex Taylor and Frederick Maunsell recommended the hero of this feat for the Victoria Cross, and if Nicholson had lived Arthur Lang would certainly have won this the most coveted of personal honours, but the authorities considered that—like Lieutenant Lockhart—he had done nothing more than his duty. This was not the opinion of the camp, however, through the tents of which the news of the gallant

exploit had run like wild-fire ; or of the Artillerymen, "who had had almost enough," and were watching for the moment when the breaches should be pronounced practicable and the order given to assault.[1]

Arthur Lang never had the pleasure of making his report in person to his Chief, for on his way to the camp he met George Medley, who had been sent down by Colonel Baird Smith on the very mission he had just fulfilled. The information for the sake of which the reconnaissance had been ordered had been obtained, but Medley thought it would be wise to actually measure the lower escarp. Lang, therefore, who now knew the way, agreed to take him down to the ditch after dark. The two officers then took measures preparatory to their common reconnaissance.

The following is Lieutenant Medley's account of that evening's experiences : "I went to the officers commanding the Batteries, and requested them to fire heavily on the breach until ten o'clock, and then to cease firing, as the attempt would be made at that hour. We then returned to the Kudsia Bagh, and arranged with the officer commanding that six picked riflemen belonging to H.M.'s 60th Rifles should accompany us, and that an officer and twenty men of the same regiment should follow in support, and should be left at the edge of the jungle while we went on to the breach ; if he saw we were being cut off, he was to come to our support, and to sound his whistle to us to fall back ; if we had a man wounded, or wanted his support, we would in like manner whistle for him. These preliminaries being

[1] "Had the camp been allowed to award one V.C.," writes Colonel Kendal Coghill, C.B., J.P., then the Adjutant of the 1st Bengal Fusiliers, "the recipient of that honour would have been Arthur Lang, and that by universal acclamation. His gallantry on the 13th and 14th was heroic. He was attached to the storming party with which I served, and I saw him fighting like a paladin on the day following his more than gallant visit to the enemy's works, alone, and in clear daylight."

arranged, and the ladder having arrived from the Park, we sat down quietly at the picquet, and ate our dinners.

It was a bright starlit night, with no moon ; the roar of the Batteries and clear abrupt reports of the shells from the mortars alone broke the stillness of the night ; and the flashes of the rockets, carcases, and fireballs lighting up the air made a really beautiful spectacle. Presently an 8-inch shell from the enemy buried itself in the ground close to where we were sitting, and, bursting well below the surface —luckily for us—covered the whole party with a shower of earth, and made us scramble away in the most admired confusion.

The gharis struck ten ; and the fire of the Batteries suddenly ceased. Our party was in readiness ; we drew our swords, felt that our revolvers were ready to hand, and, leaving the shelter of the picquet—such as it was—advanced stealthily into the enemy's country. Creeping quietly through the garden mentioned above, we quickly found ourselves under a large tree on the edge of the cover, and here we halted for a moment, conversing only in whispers. The enemy's skirmishers were firing away on our right, some thirty yards from us, and the flashes from their muskets gleamed like fireflies. The shells and rockets of the enemy illumined the space around for a moment as they sailed over our heads, and then left us in total darkness . . . Lang and I, with the six men who were to accompany us, emerged into the open—leaving the Rifle officer and his eighteen men in support—and pushed straight for the breach.

In five minutes we found ourselves on the edge of the ditch, the dark mass of the Kashmir Bastion, immediately on the other side, and the breach being distinctly discernible. Not a soul was in sight ! The counterscarp was sixteen feet deep, and steep ; Lang slid down first. I passed the ladder down, and, taking two men out of the six,

descended after him, leaving the other four above to cover our retreat. Two minutes more, and we should have been at the top of the breach, but, quiet as we had been, the enemy was on the watch, and we heard several men running from the left towards the breach. We re-ascended, therefore, though with some difficulty, and, throwing ourselves down on the grass, waited in silence for what was to happen. A number of figures immediately appeared on the top of the breach, their forms clearly discernible against the bright sky, and not twenty yards distant. We were in the deep shade, however, and apparently they could not see us. They conversed in a low tone, and presently we heard the ring of their steel ramrods as they loaded. We waited quietly, hoping they would go away, when another attempt might be made. Meanwhile we could see that the breach was a good one, the slope easy of ascent, and that there were no guns in the flank. We knew by experience, too, that the ditch was easy of descent.

After waiting some minutes longer, I gave a signal; we all jumped up at once, and ran back towards our own ground. We were discovered directly; a volley came whistling about our ears, but no one was touched. We reached our supports in safety, and retreated quietly to the Kudsia Bagh by the same road by which we had come. Lang went off to the Batteries to tell them they might open fire again, and I got on to my horse and galloped back to camp as hard as I could, to make my report to the Chief Engineer.

The left breach, near the Water Bastion, had been examined, meanwhile, by Greathed and Hovenden of the Engineers. It was reported practicable also; the musketry parapets, however, had not been as thoroughly destroyed as was desirable; another twenty-four hours' firing would have greatly improved matters; but the danger of delay and the worn-out state of the Artillerymen in the Batteries,

determined the Chief Engineer to advise the delivery of the general assault at daybreak next morning. A note to this effect was at once sent to General Wilson, and I again rode back to the Batteries to call in our officers on duty to be ready at their posts with the different Columns. The arrangements for the assault had been made previously, and, the General's order being at once issued for the Columns to fall in at three o'clock next morning, the whole camp was soon astir. It was close upon three before I returned from the Batteries. I was so thoroughly tired, that I would have given much for an hour's rest; but the excitement soon took away the fatigue. In another half-hour I was with my Column which was to storm the main breach, and, joining General Nicholson and Captain Taylor, found myself marching to the assault on Delhi."

Having followed the history of the various Batteries destined to make the breaches through which the British army eventually poured into Delhi, and noted the gallantry with which they were both erected and served, we will now observe the movements of two men who played dominating rôles throughout the memorable hours and days of the short siege—John Nicholson, to whose magnetic leading the army looked with enthusiasm, and Alex Taylor, of whom Lieutenant Medley writes, "that he virtually directed the whole siege operations in the field from their beginning to their triumphant conclusion"; adding: "no one but his own brother-officers knew how great was the responsibility that devolved on him, and the amount of anxiety, labour, and exposure he underwent in consequence."

"He was the heart and soul of every movement," writes Sir John Kaye, ably focussing the evidence of Taylor's comrades in the field—"always cheery, always active; never sparing himself; inspiring, aiding, animating all by his noble example. It was impossible not to admire, not to endeavour

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to imitate him. He never complained; he never faltered; almost, it may be said, he never rested."[1] Eighteen hours out of the twenty-four did he spend at the front, arriving at his tent in camp so worn out that his man-servant more than once found him asleep on the ground a few yards from the bed he had been too dog-tired to reach. A little sleep, a wash, a change, and back he was at the front.

As Sir John Kaye says, "he had studied the ground well, and, with quick soldierly eye, had siezed upon the exact points at which it would be desirable to erect our Batteries." And when at last the long-looked-for moments arrived, and his idea was slowly materialised before his eyes, and the walls of Delhi fell visibly under the onslaughts of the Batteries he had placed so happily, then the special characteristics of his helpful, resourceful, determined personality were underlined. Where the faces of danger and difficulty smiled most brightly, there Alex Taylor was sure to be found—whether it were in the heart of the stress and strain of the erection of No. 1 Battery; or directing the erection of Tombs' mortar Battery in the Kudsia Bagh, where the green leaves were illumined by fireflies and torn by shot and shell; or making the solitary reconnaissance during which he fixed the site of Battery No. 3; or riding with John Nicholson from the Ridge to the front, and from Battery to Battery.[2]

[1] Kaye, *op. cit.*, iii. p. 573.

[2] A comrade, General Fisher, wrote more than fifty years later: "I recollect watching Alex Taylor and Nicholson from Reid's look-out on the top of Hindu Rao's House; both were on horseback, examining sites for the advanced Batteries, after the Siege Train had arrived; and very perilous work it was, for no sooner were they discovered by the enemy's sentries than they had to ride through a storm of bullets for the nearest cover. This was more especially the case when they were in the neighbourhood of the Kashmir Gate and Bastion. . . . I met Sir Alexander almost every day on the Ridge, and there was usually a cheerful nod and a word of encouragement for us poor subs in the Ridge-trenches." "Mounted on an active cob," writes Colonel Hare, R.A., "Alex Taylor was seen day after day in the

The tension of that week—Monday to Monday—was terrible. It was a race against time, for, as soon as the mutineers realised the direction of the attack, they began to erect the *plein terre* they should have constructed earlier in the day, and to mount their big guns. "So nearly were they ready," says Medley, "that had the subsequent assault been delayed for forty-eight hours I believe we could not have assaulted at all, but must have been driven from our Batteries, or had our men knocked to pieces there."

Time was precious, the work of constructing the Batteries, mounting the guns, and making the breaches was taking longer than the Engineers had expected. Every hour's delay spelled peril, if not failure. This was obvious to all: to the Engineers, straining every nerve to achieve the impossible; to their Chief, confined by his bodily infirmities to the camp, where he was busy organising supplies, sending down reinforcements, and providing for the requirements of the days subsequent to the assault; to every man and officer in the Batteries and trenches; to the General, anxiously awaiting the course of events in the Headquarters Camp; but to none more vividly than to John Nicholson, who, never content to stand by and criticise when there was work to be done, came forward, and put his strong shoulder to the wheel, accompanied Taylor everywhere at the front, and, without loss of time, met his wishes and requirements by issuing the corresponding orders.

"Early in the siege," writes Taylor, "some delay occurred in searching for the officer commanding in the trenches, to have certain orders issued. General Nicholson, hearing of this, afterwards passed the greater part of *every*

burning sun, and constantly under fire, riding from Battery to Battery. To him, and to the other fine officers of his Corps, were due the well-chosen positions and the strength of the Siege Batteries which enabled us gunners, who manned them so rapidly, to make the breaches which were carried by the assaulting Columns on the 14th September."

day—I think—with me on the works in order to give me the benefit of the weight of his authority . . . he was also in constant communication with Baird Smith on siege questions, both before and during the attack. We certainly all worked together with the greatest harmony." In another letter he speaks of long hours spent at the front: "every day . . . with Nicholson beside me for nearly the whole of the time; any movement of the troops I wanted effected, he immediately arranged, thus securing the rapidity of action so desirable under the circumstances."

Baird Smith in camp, meanwhile, was doing invaluable service. It was fortunate that the Engineers had a man of his age, position, and determination at their head at this juncture; nor was his ill-health a great disadvantage to his Corps; the executive was in strong and able hands, and it was best that they should be absolutely free. What was needed was a cool and able organiser at headquarters, and such was Baird Smith, undoubtedly.

Meantime Nicholson and Taylor spent their days and nights at the front. Nicholson's relations to Taylor shed a new light on his character. Great-hearted and generous he always was; caution, however, was not one of his characteristics. To Taylor, however, he played the rôle of the prudent mentor. "I have been told by eye-witnesses," writes Lord Lawrence's biographer, Bosworth Smith, "that Nicholson himself, the bravest of the brave and the rashest of the rash, used, in his devotion to Taylor, to be nervously, nay, amusingly anxious, lest he should expose himself to unnecessary danger."[1] "Caution," "caution," was the word he constantly preached to the slightly younger man. Alas! alas! had he but followed his own counsel!

The leading Panjabis were deeply religious men; so also were their younger subordinates, as a body. Their

[1] Bosworth Smith, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 94.

religion was the austere Calvinistic puritanism of the Orangemen of Ulster, which, though it may be stigmatised as hard and narrow, undoubtedly produced characters of remarkable virility. This stern faith was that of the Lawrences, Robert Montgomery, Donald Macleod, Herbert Edwardes, and others; it was that of Taylor also, light-hearted Irishman though he was, an inheritance from Scotland and Switzerland.

The life in the camp before Delhi, where death stood openly and at all times at all men's elbows, bred thoughts of the Unknown Land whence none return in the minds of even the most careless. The incidents of the siege, the rich harvest reaped by Death, the heroism displayed by Hindu and Muhammadan, by Romanist, Protestant, and Free Thinker alike, bade men enlarge their conceptions of their heavenly Father.

Freewill, predestination, election, salvation, grace—these were subjects to which Taylor's mind sometimes flew when he granted himself a moment's respite from active work. These were the themes he and Nicholson discussed—Scotchmen as they both were, in spite of the land of their birth and their Irish mothers—while they drank the claret to which Medley alludes so feelingly, and sheltered themselves behind a ruin or a rock, while the bullets sung overhead and their ping-ping mingled with the crash of shot and the wailing of the native pioneers as they added another and yet another to their row of dead. "Predestination to eternal death" was a dogma which harassed Taylor and Nicholson at this time. They saw the gallant and careless struck to the dust, never to rise again. "What of their souls?" they asked themselves. If "unconverted," had they "flared out into the dark"?

In one of his letters from the camp Taylor alludes with distress to "the thought that we have been placed beside

a precipice, from slipping over the brink of which we are impotent to save ourselves." "It is difficult to believe," he writes, "that none but Christians can be saved; . . . most people disbelieve that such a dreadful result can have been intended by an All-merciful Creator."

The memory of these intimate talks with John Nicholson, while resting at the front, fills one of Taylor's letters, written to Dan Robinson soon after the joy of the successful assault had been dimmed by the loss of the great leader and gallant friend who had stood by him so effectively in the moment of need. "Poor Nicholson, Dan, is dead," he writes, on the 23rd September. "As you know, I conducted the late siege; Nicholson knew it too, and latterly he used to come to my most difficult posts, and spent the greater part of the day with me. He used to talk of home, and religion, and many other things in a very open and simple way while resting from actual work, and, although we differed often enough, I could not but be greatly struck by his honest and very truthful character. . . . Apart from all public considerations, I shall miss him very much indeed. . . . Poor fellow, he lost his life from exposing himself injudiciously; for doing which, he used to pitch into me."

But, happily, during the siege that "form, made for an army to behold," and that "heart, framed to meet the crises of an Empire," still gladdened the camp. "He was a grand fellow," writes Daly, the gallant Commander of the Guides. "He had a genius for war. He did not know his own powers, but he was beginning to find them out. His merits were recognised throughout the camp. Between the 6th and 14th he rose higher and higher in the minds of all, and when General Wilson's arrangements were read out, not a man present thought he was superseded."

Only those who remember the too frequent attitude of superiority adopted by the officers in the Queen's service

towards those in that of "John Company" will realise how great the tribute to a dominating personality was the fact that officers commanding such regiments as the 9th Lancers, 6th Dragoon Guards, and the 60th Rifles, should have been willing to serve under this regimental Captain in the Company's service, this General by grace of God, who had ridden into the camp like a King coming into his own, and, though with strangely little official position,[1] had virtually assumed the command of the Force; for it was an open secret that it was *his* will that the ostensible General was constrained to obey, and that it was his leading that the army was prepared to follow.

"At Delhi," writes Lord Roberts—and it must be remembered that when he wrote the following lines he had commanded the army both in peace and war, and doubtless weighed his words—"everyone felt that during the short time he had been with us, he had been our guiding star; and that, but for his presence in the camp, the assault, which he was about to lead, would probably never have come off. He was truly a 'tower of strength.' Any feeling of reluctance to serve under a Captain of the Company's service . . . had been completely overcome by his wonderful personality. Each man in the Force, from the General in command to the last-joined private soldier, recognised that the man whom the wild people on the frontier had deified—the man of whom, a little before, Edwardes had said to Lord Canning, 'You may rely upon this, that if ever there is a desperate deed to be done in India, John Nicholson is the man to do it'—was one who had proved himself beyond doubt capable of grappling with the crisis through which we were passing—one to follow to the death. Faith in the Commander who had claimed and

[1] He was merely the Brigadier-General commanding the Movable Column, and had no special Staff appointment.

had been given the post of honour, was unbounded, and every man was prepared to do or die for him!"[1]

The journals of the principal officers in the camp enable us to trace the movements of this heroic being—at times so terrible, and at others so gracious, who seems to belong to the cycle of the Arthurian legends rather than to the prosaic nineteenth century—as he rode from post to post to encourage, to organise, to assist, and, if necessary, to insist.

"He used often to come up to Hindu Rao's House," writes Charles Reid, "calling up from the bottom of the ladder which led to my look-out: 'Have I permission to pass this sentry of yours? he always stops me.' . . . I had a very narrow escape, yesterday," he adds, writing on the 10th September, "and so had General Nicholson who was standing close to me in my look-out —a shrapnel shell burst right over our heads; three of the balls struck the telescope which I had in my hand, but I was not touched. A Gurkha, who was sitting below me, lost his right eye, and another was struck in the throat." And once again, the hero of Hindu Rao's House writes of Nicholson: "the last time I saw this fine fellow was on the morning of the 13th September,[2] when he came up to make arrangements with me regarding the assault next morning—where we were to meet, that he would open the Kabul Gate for me from the inside after I had taken Kishanganj, and so on. But alas! I never saw his noble face again! The Bengal army had need be proud of such a man as John Nicholson!"

On the evening of the 13th, Nicholson, accompanied

[1] Roberts, *op. cit.*, i. pp. 227, 228.

[2] Both these brave officers were carried back to camp on the next afternoon, the one mortally wounded, the other disabled for many a long month to come.

by Alex Taylor, made a round of the Siege Batteries in order to convince himself that the breaches were really practicable. Lord Roberts has described the visit to *his* Battery (Battery No. 2): "On the evening of the 13th," he writes, "Nicholson came to see whether we gunners had done our work thoroughly enough to warrant the assault being made next morning. He was evidently satisfied, for when he entered our Battery, he said: 'I must shake hands with you fellows, you have done your best to make my work easy to-morrow!' Nicholson was accompanied by Taylor, who had to make certain that the breaches were practicable."[1]

We come closest to John Nicholson, however, when we listen to the words of his old and close friend, Neville Chamberlain, who, though incapacitated for active service by a severe wound received in July, was nevertheless, throughout the whole siege, a leader whose counsel was sought and followed; who was carried to the front in a litter and took temporary command of the 4th Column when its leading officers were struck down on the day of the assault and it retired in confusion; and who was the "leading spirit with the force during the dark days between the storm and capture of Delhi."[2]

"On the 12th of September" — so wrote Sir Neville to Sir Herbert Edwardes, from Delhi, on the 25th October, more than a month after his friend's death—"all the principal officers in camp were summoned to meet at the General's tent at 11 a.m. to hear the Plan of the Assault read out, and to receive their instructions. Nicholson was not present, the cause of his absence being that he had gone down to see

[1] Roberts, *op. cit.*, i. p. 221. It was on this occasion that Arthur Lang received orders to examine the breach.

[2] *Memoir of General Sir H. D. Daly*, by Major H. Daly: John Murray, London, 1905, p. 366.

the opening salvos of the great Breaching Battery within 160 yards of the Water Bastion, and the Engineers had been behind time. That evening he accompanied me on my tour on the Ridge to Hindu Rao's House, and on our return insisted on my going to his tent and dining with him. After dinner he read out the Plan of Assault for the morning of the 14th, and some of the notes then made by him I afterwards found among his papers.

The 13th was, of course, a busy day for everybody, but I saw a good deal of him, as he rode over to my tent two or three times to get me to exert my influence with General Wilson in favour of certain measures expedient. On returning from my evening tour on the Ridge I found him in the headquarters' camp, whither he had come to urge upon the General the importance of not delaying the assault if the breach should be reported practicable. We sat talking together for some time, and I begged him to stay and dine with me, but he said he could not, as he must be back in his camp to see his officers, and arrange all details."

"Of all the superior officers in the Force"—Sir Neville had written previously—"not one took the pains he did to study our position and provide for its safety. Hardly a day passed but that he visited every Battery, breastwork, and post; and frequently at night, though not on duty, he would ride round our outer line of sentries to see that the men were on the alert, and to bring to notice any point he considered not duly provided for. When the arrival of the Siege Train and reinforcements enabled us to assume the offensive, *John Nicholson was the only officer, not being an Engineer, who took the trouble to study the ground which was to become of so much importance to us*; and, had it not been for his going down that night, I believe that we would have had to re-capture, at considerable loss of life, the positions he

was certainly the main cause of our occupying without resistance. From the day of the trenches being opened, to the day of the assault, he was constantly on the move from one Battery to the other, and *when he returned to camp, he was constantly riding backwards and forwards to the Chief Engineer endeavouring to remove any difficulties.*"[1]

It was during one of the fleeting visits to which Chamberlain alludes, that Nicholson uttered his famous tribute to the part played by Taylor both before and during the siege. He seems to have ridden straight up to the camp from our Breaching Batteries—nearly two miles distant—and to have gone, burning with generous enthusiasm for the heroic work in progress there, to Chamberlain's tent, where, as was not infrequent, he found his old friend, Henry Daly. His glowing tale was met with an account of the petty jealousies and ineptitudes of the headquarters' camp: he learned that it contained men whose nerves were irritated by the unavoidable delay which had occurred in the construction of Batteries the sites of which they had never visited, and who were loud in their criticism of the Corps which was doing such splendid service at the front, and even of the officer who was directing the siege operations in the teeth of difficulties which the General had declared insuperable. He was disgusted that men working safely in offices in camp should criticise their brothers who were bearing the heat and burden of the day at the front.

"Nicholson was always indignant against wrong or injury, against *untruth* of any kind"—so Sir Henry Daly reported in describing this interview to Sir Herbert Edwardes—"and knowing well the brave part that Alex Taylor took in the Engineering difficulties and triumphs of the siege, and the assault that was victorious at last, he was indignant at the

[1] Forrest, *Sir N. Chamberlain, op. cit.*, pp. 370 ff.

thought that he had not justice done to him, and said: 'Well, if I live through this, I shall let the world know who took Delhi—that Alex Taylor did it.'"[1]

He was aware of the secrecy in which much of Alex Taylor's preparatory work at Delhi had been necessarily veiled, and was troubled on his death-bed by the thought that this veil might never be withdrawn. "Remember to tell them that Alex Taylor took Delhi"—this was among his last utterances.[2]

Seven years later, the man whose energy and resource had brought the capture of Delhi into the region of possibility—John Lawrence, then Viceroy—said in Durbar: "When I think of the genius and bravery buried at Delhi, I feel that our triumph was indeed dearly bought. There was John Nicholson! I think of him as one without whom perhaps not even Englishmen would have taken Delhi. . . . As long as an Englishman survives in India, the name of John Nicholson will not be forgotten."

[1] See Lady Edwardes, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 62.

Note by Mrs Layard, in whose possession are all Lady Edwardes' historical papers:—"I find this in a memo in my uncle's handwriting, dated January 30, '58, commencing, 'Captain Daly, speaking last night of dear John Nicholson.'" The whole memo is a note of the one conversation with Captain Daly, and gives Captain Daly's recollection of various sayings of John Nicholson, spoken at various times, apparently. This particular phrase was used, "in Chamberlain's tent." Before the assault, therefore.

[2] "When I last saw Henry," wrote General Henry Brownlow's brother, Colonel Cecil Brownlow, in 1911, "he told me that one of Nicholson's last utterances was 'Remember to tell them that Alex Taylor took Delhi.'" The writer of this memoir had this passage in a private letter read to General Brownlow, who was then very ill. "So he did," he observed, "I heard him with my own ears."

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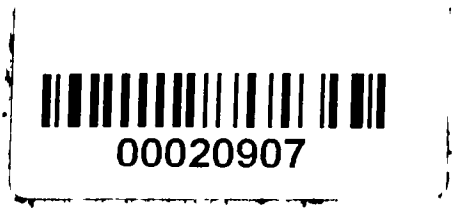
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